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16 October '98

HAGUE SPEECH LIFTS TORIES

ACTOR, DOCTOR, BON VIVEUR

WHO ON EARTH IS TOM BAKER?

'FABULOUS – IT'S SO UNEXPECTED, HONEST, TOE-CURLING AND INCREDIBLY FUNNY . . . JOLLY, JOLLY GOOD' IAN HISLOP

ANARCHIC, RIBALD AND INDISCREET - THIS IS THE MAN WHO HAS DRUNK WITH HOPKINS AND BERNARD, WORKED WITH OLIVIER AND PASOLINI, AND LIVED WITH ABANDON AND A CATHOLIC UPBRINGING. TOM BAKER REVEALS ALL IN THIS YEAR'S MOST MEMORABLE AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

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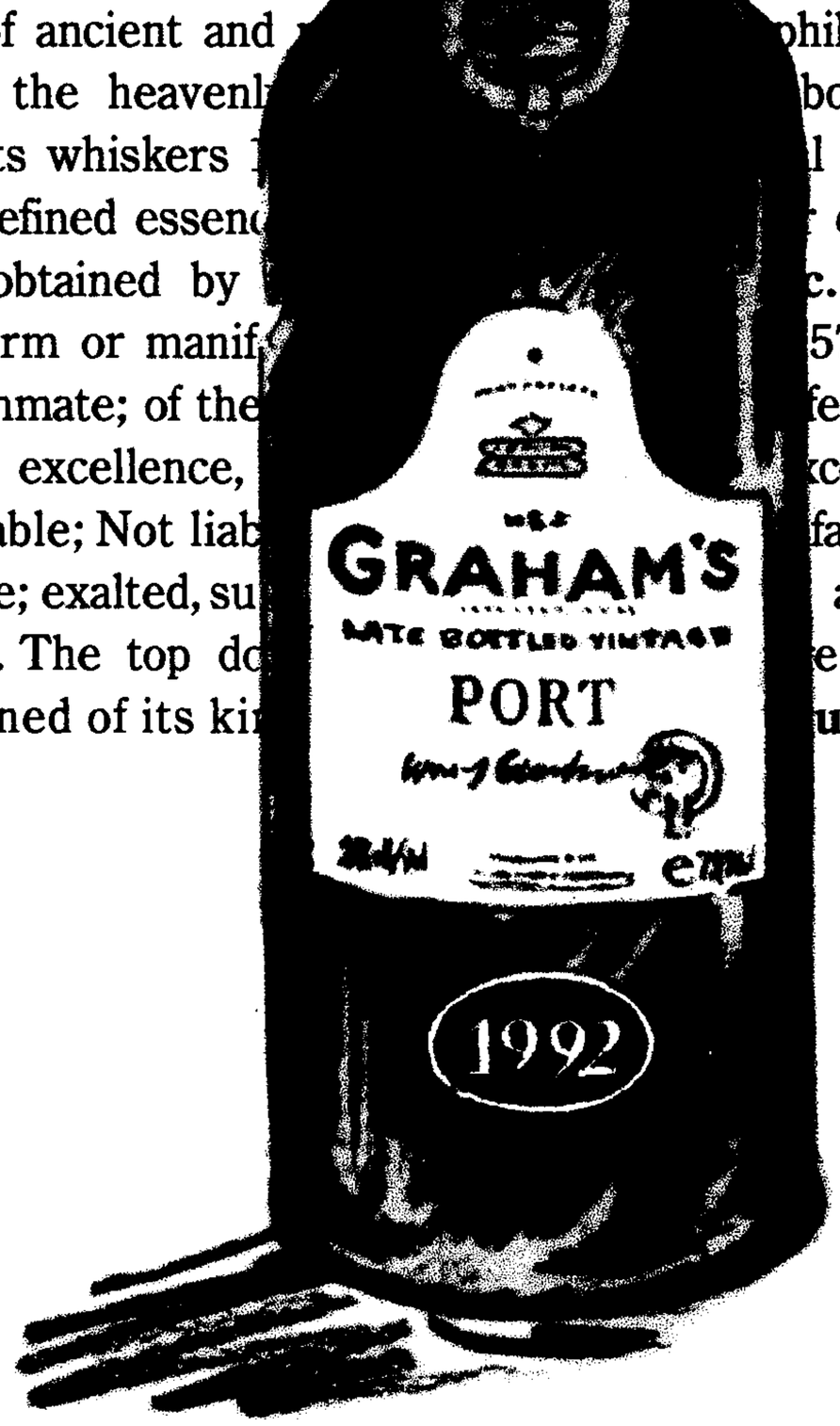

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ABC CONSUMER PRESS

COLOUR SECTION

THE Rolls Royce brains at the foreign office (FO) have been on top form during the Kosovo crisis — as was proved by the farcical run-up to the "big power" contact group meeting on Kosovo last Thursday.

On Wednesday morning the FO let it be known that the meeting was definitely on, but in the early afternoon — faced with continuing disagreements among the six member states — it suddenly announced the talks had been scrapped.

Great was the panic inside King Charles Street, therefore, when US secretary of state Madeleine Albright announced on CNN an hour later that she was coming to London to the talks. The fact that she told CNN first rather than the FO speaks volumes about the so-called "special relationship". The FO plunged into a series of "emergency meetings" and later that night, once it had belatedly figured out what the Americans wanted, announced that the meeting would go ahead after all.

ONE of the loudest ovations at the Labour party conference followed a ringing declaration from deputy prime minister John Prescott on behalf of 40,000 pensioners from the former nationalised bus companies.

When the National Bus company was privatised in 1986, he said, "the Tories raided the pension fund and refused to recognise the pensioners' claim to millions of pounds of surpluses. I have today [30 September] instructed our lawyers to stop the legal fancy dancing. I have told them to open discussions with the pensions trustees to achieve a just out-of-court settlement as quickly as possible in the coming months and end this shameful delay."

Eye readers will recall that in 1986 the pensions ombudsman upheld a complaint from former National Bus driver Frank Wheeler that the £168m surplus in the national bus pension scheme (BEST) should not have been swiped by the government since it belonged to the pensioners.

The ombudsman told Mr Wheeler to get the money back from the trustees, who were then two officials at the official solicitor's office. Tory transport ministers adamantly refused to hand over the money, but agreed instead to pay for the trustees to sue the government. So the taxpayer started paying for both sides in a hugely expensive legal wrangle which looked like going on for several years during which thousands more pensioners would die.

To everyone's surprise, this expensive "legal fancy dancing" continued unabated under the new Labour government and has done so for 18 months. On 6 October the *Eye* put two questions to the department of the environment, transport and the regions about its secretary of state's conference promise.

1 How much had the "legal fancy dancing" on the bus pension case cost taxpayers since Labour came to office last year?

2 Why had there been such a "shameful delay" in "new" Labour's resolving the matter in favour of the pensioners?

Answers were promised at once. They did not come. On the morning of 8 October, a different press officer rang to say the answers would be in our hands by 4pm. At 4.30pm another press officer rang to say they would "definitely" be coming by midday on the 9th. At midday on the 9th, another press officer rang with the remarkable news that "the DPM would like to talk to you himself about this". He would be ringing between 2.30 and 3pm that very afternoon.

A great thrill of anticipatory excitement ran through the *Eye* offices. But 2.30 came, then 3 o'clock: no phone call from the DPM. At 4.30 another press officer rang to say the DPM had been "called away". The answers to the questions were still not available. The *Eye* reminded the department that we went to press on Monday the 12th at midday. High noon came and went, and so did the silence from the DPM and his department. Still no answers.

PS: The official solicitor still obdurately refuses to appoint the man who bust this whole case open for the pensioners, Frank Wheeler, as a trustee. Wheeler has been forced to go to court to contest this decision.

THE bad-tempered Euro-battle at the Tory party conference between former chancellors Norman Lamont and Ken Clarke, which ended in a draw, disguised an uneven performance in their business interests.

Clarke, who is still an MP, has a clutch of lucrative directorships headed up by the tobacco industry. But Lamont, when he was finally sacked by John Major, used his legendary foresight and plumped for, er, the tiger economies in the Far East.

He became a director of the First Philippine Investment Trust, which was wound up soon after the tigers began to collapse in earnest last year. His other interests, which have not been much more successful, included the Taiwan Investment Trust, the Indonesia Trust, and the Balli Group.

Another remunerated director of the hapless First Philippine Investment Trust was Sir Archibald Hamilton, the busy Tory MP for Epsom and Ewell. Sir Archie was also a director of the trust's subsidiary First Philippine Securities, and of the Siam Selective Growth Trust, whose selective growth was not improved by the collapse of the Thai baht last year.

Sir Archie got rather more reward for his consultancy to one of the world's biggest investment bank, Merrill Lynch. Poor Merrill Lynch got heavily involved in the doomed hedge fund LTCM, which has temporarily been bailed out by a combination of banks and finance houses including Merrill Lynch. Merrill is now sacking 3,000 workers. Will the axe fall on Sir Archie's £15,000-a-year consultancy?

STAFF at the Royal Academy have got their own back on pompous Royal Academician Ron Kitaj by ensuring that his large but humdrum print of President Clintoris has been, er, well hung.

The print, part of a collection currently exhibited in the Friends Room at the RA, has been placed next to a statue of a naked woman on her knees. Venus (for it is she) is now being referred to as "Monica".

"Try buying some Ikea furniture"

Street of Shame

"HE PROMISED love — but now I'm devastated," sobbed glamorous widow Laura Ewing, as she revealed her affair with Des Lynam in an "exclusive" interview for the *Mail on Sunday* of 27 September, which earned her £55,000. Oddly enough, she made the same "exclusive" revelation in that day's *News of the World*, from which she collected another £55,000.

But the sequel was odder still. One week later the *MoS* savaged its former source with a two-page *exposé* of her shadowy past. "Our inquiries have discovered that she may have gone under several names and may have had as many as four husbands, the last of whom provoked a bitter family battle when he died 10 years ago, leaving £500,000 to Laura and nothing to his children," the paper reported.

"She was also interviewed when her husband's family asked police to investigate the death of his first wife, who plunged down the stairs of their home in 1980." La Ewing stood condemned as a "fiercely ambitious woman" who had been happy to "reinvent her background — and her age — whenever necessary".

Was Ewing upset at being turned over by the paper which had treated her with such sympathy and generosity seven days earlier? Not at all. As *Mail* executives tell the *Eye*, the information in this supposed hatchet-job was provided by Ewing herself — and earned her a further £25,000 from Associated Newspapers!

AT LAST, on 11 October, the *Observer* ran a brief editorial defending Greg Palast, author of its "cash for access" scoop about Labour lobbyists, against a grotesque front page smear by the *Daily Mirror*.

During the Labour party conference the *Mirror* alleged that Palast had behaved like a "sex pest" towards Margaret Payne, an unsuccessful candidate in Labour's NEC elections. Labour party officials, who hate Palast for his damaging "cash for access" allegations during the summer, helped the *Mirror* with its smear.

The *Observer*'s investigative reporter Jonathan Calvert conducted a full-scale investigation into the *Mirror* smear, exposing the whole story as a tissue of lies and inventions. When Calvert's piece was not published on the Sunday after the conference — 4 October — the *Observer* staff erupted in fury.

Editor-in-chief Will Hutton, columnist Nick Cohen and business editor Ben Laurance all insisted that the *Mirror* smear should not be allowed to stand uncriticised. Laurance even threatened to resign. The short editorial, which left out many of the more telling points against the *Mirror* smear, was the result. Now the *Mirror* editor, Piers "Boy" Morgan, will have to defend his nonsense at the press complaints commission (PCC).

Having fun! Wanna go mad with Blair anytime? (He wants to go mad with you!!) Make sure you keep in the know, fill in this card and send it back to us now.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for buying the record, keep it safe, one day I might sign it for you! I'll be in touch real soon. Love Ya.

Blair

Record company publicity

THE *Sunset Times* continues its fearless campaign to expose the monopolistic supermarket chains. In its latest report, *ST* hacks Stephen Bevan and David Smith list some of the tricks of the trade: "Dominance of the market. It enables stores to negotiate the best deals from suppliers... Special offers. Loss leaders are used to create an impression of value and are promoted nationally..."

But of course it isn't only supermarkets that squeeze suppliers and use predatory pricing to inflate profits. Can we look forward to a new *Sunday Times* crusade against the similar techniques used by a certain Anglo-American-Australian media baron?

"PETER Mandelson... is sensibly watering down Fairness at Work rules, so they don't crush small businesses." So gushed the *Sun*, praising the trade and industry secretary in one of its regular pro-Mandy editorials. But it seems the dilution might not go far enough for certain bigger businesses.

On a recent Saturday morning a letter from *Sun* editor David Yelland landed on the doormat of every *Sun* employee, warning them of the dangers of allowing the unions to raise their ugly heads in Wapping.

Showing a talent for purple prose he rarely gets to indulge in his paper, Yelland wrote darkly that "union power... has merely been in hibernation. Now the sleeping giant is stirring." Drawing on the wisdom of his 35 years, he told his young team "about the bad old days" — an apocalyptic vision of "no supplements, no pull-outs, no regional editions"; of the *Sun* being "held to ransom by union officials" and of "wildcat strikes".

If the unions were allowed into Wapping, Yelland warned his staff, "that cannot be good for you and your family".

In fact Yelland is too young to remember how bad industrial relations used to be at News International. He had barely started in journalism when his kindly boss Rupert Murdoch implemented massive redundancies and crushed the print unions as his papers left Fleet Street en masse. But the thorough defeat Murdoch inflicted in 1986 is beginning to look reversible. Hence Yelland's worry. "The Fairness at Work plans have not become law yet and it's possible some of them never will. The newspaper industry and the CBI are lobbying the government to make changes to the various proposals in the white paper," he writes.

Mind you, a Labour government isn't going to backtrack on such a traditionally heartfelt issue just because the *Sun* doesn't like the idea... er, is it?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Mr Blair's 50-minute address repeatedly warned activists that hard choices and bitter attacks faced them."

— *Guardian*, 30 September

"BUZZWORDS. Tony Blair's 5,097-word speech shed little light on the Third Way, which got only two mentions... Hard choices (nine last year) completely disappeared."

— *Guardian*, 30 September

TREVOR KAVANAGH, political editor of the *Sun*, treated his readers to a short history lesson last week to explain why separate Scottish and English parliaments were a bad idea.

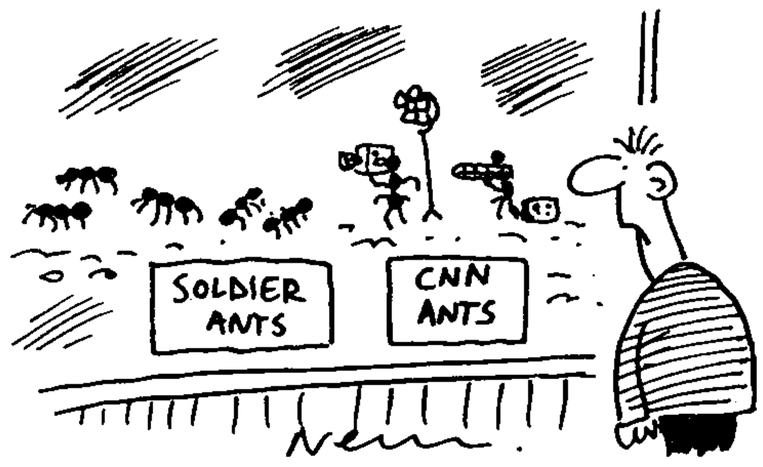
"The Act of Union which put the two countries under one monarch in 1707 created the world's first single market," he revealed. "The two countries formed a powerful alliance that fought off the French in the 100 Years War and paved the way for the British Empire."

The normally accepted dates for the 100 Years War are 1337-1453.

***SUN* editor David Yelland continues his mission to get to know his staff.**

Indeed, when he received a memo from Irish desk sub editor Danny Gallagher, giving details of where he could be contacted when he was on holiday, Yelland wrote back immediately thanking him for his diligence.

The memo concluded with the promise: "The next time I'm in Dublin I will look you up." Gallagher works a few yards away from Yelland's desk in Wapping.



AFTER the Woodrow Wyatt diaries, can Paul "Loonybins" Johnson be far behind?

"For 30 years I have kept very detailed diaries, which record everything I do, whom I meet and what they say to me," he reveals. "Some of the material is hair-raising."

Though he neglects to mention it, Loonybins intends to bequeath the diaries to his son Daniel, who must then decide whether to publish. What will straight-laced Daniel do about the sections describing Paul's antics with his red-headed mistress Gloria Stewart, who used to spank the great historian on his bare bottom while he loudly confessed to being "a naughty boy"?

With any luck Daniel will not understand this filth. For Paul has told a friend that although the diary includes a complete record of all his sexual escapades, he has written them up in "a special code" which mere mortals will be unable to decipher.

LEATHERWARE designer Bill Amberg is a favourite of *Vogue* magazine, especially the "In Vogue" section featuring new products.

Rarely does an issue appear without one or more of Bill's fabulously expensive creations being featured. September's selection, for example, was his leather and sheepskin baby sling — a snip at £210 and definitely not available at Mothercare.

No doubt pressure of space prevents *Vogue* noting the intriguing coincidence that the editor of the "In Vogue" section, Susie Forbes, happens to be married to Bill Amberg!

Will the literacy hour be fun or just a straighjacket?

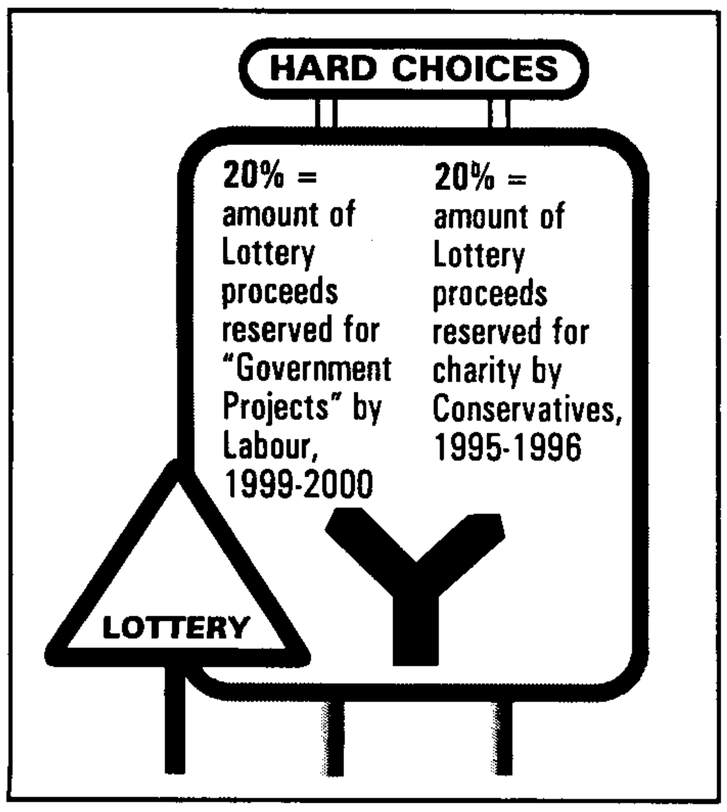
Headline, Review section, *Independent*, 1 October

"There were a number of serious errors in this morning's paper. The individuals responsible have been disciplined. The continuing stream of mistakes is both damaging and embarrassing, and must be stopped."

— *Independent* editor Simon "Pussy" Kelner, memo to staff, 1 October

Going undergound

Headline, Review section, *Independent*, 2 October


HARD CHOICES
20% = amount of Lottery proceeds reserved for "Government Projects" by Labour, 1999-2000
20% = amount of Lottery proceeds reserved for charity by Conservatives, 1995-1996
LOTTERY

LOTTERY NEWS

IT IS still early days, of course, but Vernons' Easy Play seems to be in terminal decline — sales have now dropped below a million a week.

The prediction by lottery regulator John Stoker that "the good causes will get broadly the same return from Easy Play as from existing National Lottery games" (*Eye* 959) is thus about as likely to happen as — er, well, winning the lottery.

Unless there is a massive upsurge in sales, the good causes will receive less than 23 percent of Easy Play's revenue compared to the 30 percent or so they get from the rest of the lottery. But there is also the question of how many people are buying Easy Play instead of other lottery tickets — what's known in the business as "cannibalism". The more cannibalism there is, the fewer scratchcards and on-line tickets are being sold — and on marginal sales of these tickets the good causes receive between 32 and 37 percent.

Assessing the level of cannibalism is obviously guesswork, but it seems high enough at present to cast doubt on whether Easy Play is currently making *any money at all* for the "good causes".

SOCCER NEWS

WHY was the kick-off for the European cup match at Wembley between Arsenal and Panathinaikos on 30 September twice delayed by a total of 25 minutes?

Officially the blame was put on Tube chaos that left thousands of fans stranded. But there's *always* Tube chaos and kick-offs are never put back at Wembley. The real reason? The fuss the press corps kicked up when hacks discovered that their usual complimentary food goodie bags had been replaced with McDonald's doughnuts.

The sad hacks (press and broadcasting) threatened to boycott the match unless they were found something more digestible to munch. Eventually Ronald McDonald intervened and sorted everything out.

SAINTLY Sir Tom Farmer may be celebrating becoming the world's top tyre and exhaust tycoon with Kwik-Fit's £105m takeover of Speedy Europe, but his Midas touch has failed at ailing Scottish soccer club Hibernian.

Last year Hibernian lost a staggering £995,048 under his chairmanship. Equally staggering is the number of PR companies the club has gone through — three since July — in a vain attempt to stem the wrath of angry fans which has been fuelled, no doubt, by a series of articles about the club's woes by freelance journalist Simon Pia in *Scotland on Sunday*.

The latest PR outfit to have the Hibs contract is Media House, run by former *Sun* rottweiler Jack Irvine, whose tactics appear to have changed little since his days at the Currant Bun. Since taking on the portfolio Slippery Jack and his lackeys — whose select list of clients includes Saudi murder case nurse Lucille McLaughlin and shamed Newcastle FC directors Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall (who think merchandise-buying fans are suckers and that Tyneside women are "dogs") — have been doing the rounds trying to dig up dirt on Pia. All, happily, to no avail.

HACKWATCH

Nigel Dumpster

FOLLOWING the deaths of Sir David English and Lord Rothermere, Associated Newspapers supremo Paul Dacre has been quick to assert his authority by sacking the editor of the *Mail on Sunday*. But who's next for the chop? All eyes turn to Nigel Pratt-Dumpster.

In a new year message to readers last January, Dempster boasted of having provided "a truly unrivalled service in 1997, followed up slavishly by lesser equipped areas of Fleet Street". Alas, the only Dempster stories that have been "followed up" since then have been his own escapades — punching his deputy on the nose, and appearing in court to explain why he refused to give a blood sample when stopped on suspicion of drunk-driving. If only the column itself — described by Dempster as "a treasure-trove of scoops from around the world" — were half as exciting...

10 September: Lord Portman's youngest son Piers, 27, and wife Lucy, 25-year-old daughter of Prince Michael of Kent's equerry Sir Christopher Thompson, have had a baby girl — "to the delight of grandpa Viscount Portman", Dempster reveals.

14 September: There is happiness for fashion icon Lady Harlech, whose 12-year-marriage to the son of the aristocratic former British ambassador to Washington ended with a decree nisi on 27 June. Lady H's former mother-in-law Pamela, the American-born former London editor of *Vogue* who married David Ormsby-Gore, the 5th baron, in 1969 and was widowed 16 years later *(Get on with it — Ed.)* tells Dempster that Amanda Harlech has been staying in Kenya with Hugo de Ferranti, 38, only son of electronics heir Sebastian de Ferranti who built a modern stately home at Henbury near Macclesfield, where he has been host to several members of the royal family.

15 September: Former Duran Duran singer Simon LeBon and his supermodel wife have taken their three daughters — Amber Rose, Saffron, Tallulah — on an outing to Legoland at Windsor. "It was Tallulah's birthday and Simon wanted her to have a day to remember," says a pal.

16 September: Supermodel Jodie Kidd's sister Jemma, whose father Johnny is the grandson of the late Canadian-born newspaper tycoon Lord Beaverbrook, has been going out with David de Rothschild — 20-year-old son of merchant banker Sir Evelyn — for more than a year, but there are still no wedding bells. "I'm far too young to get married," explains Jemma, 23.

23 September: Ruth Savill, wife of millionaire publisher Peter, has given birth to the couple's second child, Amy Louise, in Dublin. Peter is "delighted", Dempster reveals.

24 September: The Marquess of Blandford's ex-girlfriend Arabella Zamoyska has decided to give modelling a whirl: today she will step on to the catwalk with girl-about-town Tamara Beckwith. "I want it to be fun and enjoy myself," Arabella confides.

28 September: Stephane Graff, 33, was among the guests at a party given by his father, diamond dealer Laurence Graff, at the new Knightsbridge restaurant Floriana. "I have no girlfriend at the moment and am not looking for one either," Stephane informs Dempster. "It's good to be single."

1 October: Only three years old when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, actor James Gaddas will be playing the charismatic president opposite Lysette Anthony in the new West End play *Jackie*. Handsome, blue-eyed James married dancing teacher Deborah Radin in August after proposing to her on a gondola in Venice. "I'm just a born romantic," he sighs.

6 October: A nerve-testing day for "little-known actress Katie Knight-Adams", who appears in a revival of *West Side Story* opening tonight. Property developer's daughter Katie, 24, reveals that her boyfriend, trumpeter Paul Spong, will be in the audience. "Paul has been a great support and a great friend," she tells Dempster.

7 October: There is happiness again for royal assistant Tiggy Legge-Bourke's younger sister Zara, 32, who was dumped last year by her husband Richard Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax. "Love has blossomed with handsome bachelor Charlie Gordon-Watson, 38," Dempster reports, "and, in a merry-go-round of romantic bliss, his previous squeeze Louise Crammond, 35, has fallen for Lord Howland, heir-in-line to the Dukedom of Bedford and historic Woburn Abbey."

9 October: Veteran broadcaster Sir Peter O'Sullevan is furious: wanting to watch the 2.45 race from Pontefract, he tuned into the Racing channel — to which he has a subscription — but found only a blank screen. "The service was withdrawn without any notice," he tells Dempster. "I don't know what is going on."

Bemused readers of Dempster's Diary will know just how he feels.

LUVVIES

"My parents were spawned in an environment of struggle, life and death... when it came to work I wanted to express not only the agonies of those years but also to express what I have in my mind. To give birth to something which is profound, which really inspires and moves people... I don't wish to shock, I want to move them, I wish to embrace them. In a way it's a desire to woo, to love, to give and to give from the very core."

STEPHEN BERKOFF, Classic FM

"Actors can usually use an animal exercise. Going to the zoo is wonderful research... check out Charles Laughton in Henry VIII. He's doing a squirrel. Watch him eat. He was a squirrel. He didn't play the squirrel as a squirrel. He was a human being with squirrel characteristics. That's the key."

JACK WALTZER, "acting coach to the stars", the Sunday Times

(Submitted by Catherine Feeny)

"I can sit in an armchair for days just smoking cigarettes. I admit I am very lazy. Maybe it's a mistake, but acting is how I validate myself... It doesn't get any better the more you do it. Sometimes I wish someone would shoot me in the back of the head rather than have to go on and perform."

ANDREA HART, the Guardian.

(Submitted by Francis Harvey)

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

BAD news for traditional festival music lovers and taxpayers in Edinburgh, where ageing wrong-note composer Pierre Boulez is to be the new music chief.

He revealed a glimpse of his musical vision at the annual university lecture while speaking about designing the concert halls of the future. "The solution is compressed air," he said.

The Cité de la Musique in Paris is apparently to be built so that multi-spatial music, "such as, for instance, my *Repons*", can be performed on moving stages which float around. "And the concert hall must be *beeg*, very *beeg*, so that, for instance, my work *Repons* can be performed."

For several decades Boulez has been funding such projects by extracting millions from successive French governments who would appear philistine if they refused him. For some in the audience in Edinburgh it was all too much. An embattled writer of tonal music with melodies asked the 73-year-old if he would concede that the audience for new classical music had fallen to virtually zero because no one likes it?

"Well, you see, it is like this," replied Boulez. "When you 'ear the difficult music, first you say 'oh', then you 'ear it again, and you say 'ah', and then you 'ear it again and you say 'ooh'."

Enthusiastic applause all round.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

IN THE TEAROOM

IT's hard to credit it now, but not so very long ago foreign secretary Robin Cook was a man to be taken seriously. Presentationally challenged, true; but a figure of real political substance well placed to seize the hour that the public tired of Blairite vapidity.

Now look at him: a risible, strutting martinet. He might very well explode under the pressure of his own pomposity were it not for churlish, pouting Gaynor. Her job, it seems, is to be a sort of standing reproach, rather like one of those court jesters of antiquity who went about with a pig's bladder on a stick to remind the boss that he was mortal, prone to errors of judgement.

Cook is a feisty little weasel and is determined to be really important once again. He has begun his comeback by picking a fight with Peter Mandelson over trade promotion and export licensing. These matters are jointly decided between the foreign office and the department of trade. Cook says he can't run an ethical foreign policy if sly old Mandy is signing export waivers under the table so Third World dictators can supply themselves with nerve-gas to massacre their first born. He wants total control.

It's a smart move. Cook knows that as trade supremo Mandy will be cutting a cosmopolitan figure, jetting about in the big league. He's noticed, too, that Mandy is taking a close interest in Brazilian affairs. He's correctly discerned that Mandy wants to be foreign secretary.

Number 10 will arbitrate in this turf war over exports. If Tony sides with Robin, Mandy is back to being a minister without portfolio: with Gordon Brown handling the big economic stuff and the FO doing trade, all that's left at the DTI is the wretched dome and handing out factsheets to small businessmen. But Cook scores even if the PM supports Mandelson (as he surely must). From now on every dodgy arms deal, every experiment in "constructive engagement" that ends in a massacre, every ethical shortcoming on the part of perfidious Albion can be laid at the door of the Prince of Darkness. And the punters will believe it.

'Urquhart'

AFTER the shenanigans in the Glasgow constituency of Eastwood during the tenure of troubled, pickaxe handle-waving Tory MP Allan Stewart, it must have come as a relief to residents when "new" Labour pipsqueak James "Jim" Murphy was elected on 1 May last year.

His victory in what was once the Tories' safest Scottish seat saw Stewart's majority of 11,700 in 1992 become a Labour majority of 3,200. But Eastwood, formerly East Renfrewshire, is more than an agreeable middle-class suburb of former Tories. It contains the gritty industrial enclave of Barrhead, and as recession looms employers and trade unions there are worried about the implications for jobs.

The managing director of a tanning works who feared he would have to lay off workers because of the strength of the pound invited the new MP to visit his factory to see things for himself — and got a reply saying that Murphy was taking "a few weeks" off because his wife was expecting a baby. The baby duly arrived but the appointment was not rescheduled.

Next Murphy cancelled a visit to a cabinet maker's workshop because, he said, he had injured himself playing football. Again the visit was not rescheduled. He is never too busy, however, to write a column for the local *Barrhead News*, in which he often discusses his favourite sport. Very "new" Labour, very Alastair Campbell.

AFTER the Labour party conference local government minister Hilary Armstrong issued a press release coyly titled "Let's get together", urging town hall chiefs to get into bed with the private sector more often.

Armstrong knows all about "getting together". As the most sponsored MP in Blackpool, she spoke on four platforms paid for by Littlewoods, BT, Jarvis and Onyx.

In particular Jarvis and Onyx are especially interested in local government privatisation. Construction firm Jarvis is expanding its private finance initiative deals into schools, while Onyx, the rubbish group, has been taking over council refuse services for years.

Armstrong sharing a platform with Onyx UK's managing director Percy Powell at a meeting sponsored by Onyx will have been particularly shocking for council workers. This summer it was revealed that jobless Liverpool teenagers had to queue up in a "pen" at 6.30am in the hope of a day's work on the bins. The teenagers got £3.25 an hour if Onyx's regular bin men called in sick, but were sent home empty handed if they didn't in a scheme the *Liverpool Echo* described as "The Dark Ages".

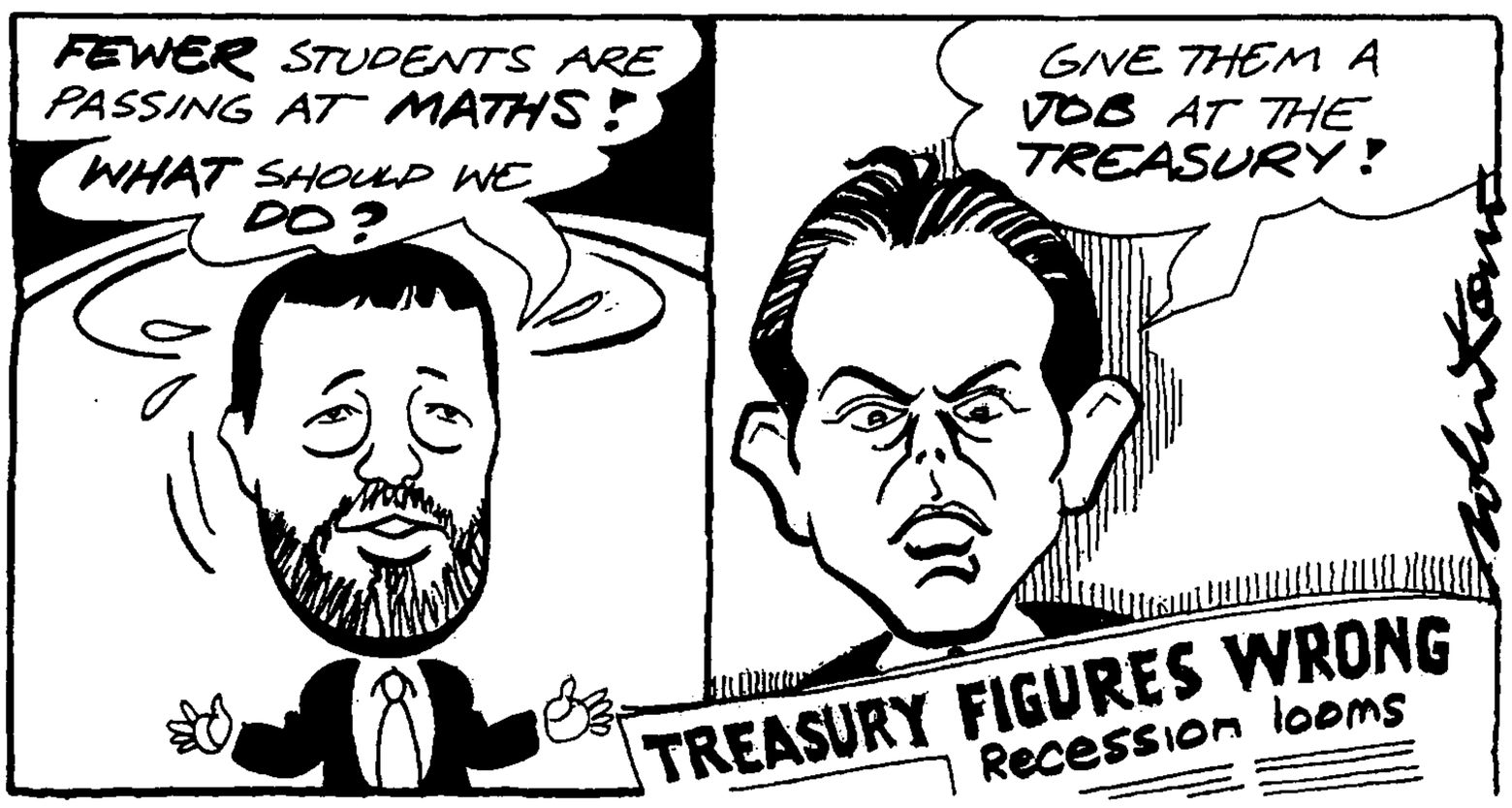
Of course appearing on a sponsored platform is not the same as working for a company. But the Armstrong household does that too. When Islington council wanted to hire an expert on implementing Armstrong's white paper "modern local government — in touch with local people", it called on Professor Paul Corrigan. He is an acknowledged expert on local government, being the partner of one H. Armstrong.

BARONESS Thatcher is clearly still smarting from the loss of her former Finchley Parliamentary seat to Labour.

"Why do you think we lost my constituency?" she asked a former resident of the area at the 10th anniversary reception of the Bruges group.

In the politest possible terms the resident in question pointed out that the area had changed a great deal in terms of people and now had a much higher number of the ethnic minorities resident there.

"But the Muslims believe in God," retorted the Iron Lady. "They should be voting Conservative!"


FEWER STUDENTS ARE PASSING AT MATHS!
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
GIVE THEM A JOB AT THE TREASURY!
TREASURY FIGURES WRONG
Recession looms

O·B·N

"It's nice to meet you because I read Bizarre and I think it's wonderful. Keep up the good work — you're doing a great job and it looks excellent. Bizarre is a fun read and I like to keep up with all the showbusiness news."

Tony Blair on Dominic Mohan's page in the Sun

"From the moment I heard the opening bars of Dario G's Ibiza anthem Sunchyme I realised that the days of dull politics were long gone. The PM put his hand on his heart throughout and his words gave me goosebumps. I realised later I had witnessed something very special. It was perfectly scripted, simple enough for a layman like me to understand and oozed passion."

Dominic Mohan on Tony Blair's speech, in the Sun

TONY BLAIR faces a ticklish dilemma over his plan to tear up the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, due to be announced in the queen's speech.

Though the scheme is meant to regulate the price of drugs supplied to the NHS, greedy pharmaceutical giants have abused the system by selling off their patents to smaller companies not party to the agreement, causing costs to soar.

Any changes will not be easy, however, as they will bring into conflict "new" Labour's two big priorities: cutting welfare spending and, er, giving large corporations money and attention.

The drug companies are central to the party's new corporate culture. A quick tour around the exhibition hall at the Labour conference made this clear, with Pfizer at stand 55, and Merck, Sharpe and Dohme at stands five, six and seven. Of the companies, Novartis has its claws most firmly into the party. As the *Eye* has revealed, Novartis is actually a sponsor of the party nationally and had a table supplied with warm ministers at Labour's gala dinner. Novartis also ran a conference fringe meeting to explain "Science: the industry of the future". There was a free buffet, but the *Eye* cannot ascertain if it included the firm's genetically modified sweetcorn.

Novartis also pays Labour MP Dr Nick Palmer up to £5,000 a year as a "parliamentary adviser". Palmer, who used to work for Novartis full time, claims his main leisure pursuits are "conflict simulation games". No doubt he spends hours with a computer-simulated battle between his two masters, Novartis and the Labour cabinet. The rest of us will have to wait for the outcome of the real thing.

LORDS FOR HIRE

HERE are a selection of peers with paid interests in the broadcasting and cable sphere.

Life Peers

Lord Baker: Director of Bell Cable Media plc.

Lord Chalfont: Director of The Television Corporation plc.

Lord Crickhowell: Deputy chairman of HTV plc.

Lord Eatwell: Director of Anglia Television Group Ltd.

Baroness Flather: Director of Meridian Broadcasting; Tristar Broadcasting; The Cable Corporation.

Lord Hollick: Chairman of Meridian Broadcasting.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Chairman of Scottish Radio Holdings.

Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach: Director of Telewest plc.

Lord Steel: Director of Border Television plc.

Lord Weatherill: Director of Telewest Communications (London South Cable company); chairman of Parliamentary Channel Ltd.

Hereditary

Viscount Chandos: Director of International Network Television Holdings Ltd.

HEALTH workers at the Labour party conference in Blackpool were greatly cheered by a rousing speech on 29 September at the Imperial Hotel by health minister Tessa Jowell, who denounced the continuing menace of tobacco and outlined her plans to ban a lot of tobacco advertising.

They were less cheered as they came out of the meeting to read the following announcement on the hotel noticeboard: "8pm to midnight, Dickens Suite, Philip Morris conference dinner."

Philip Morris, which produces Marlboro cigarettes, is not only one of the world's biggest manufacturers. It also famously hired Margaret Thatcher as a consultant at a reputed fee of half a million pounds a year.

Some Labour supporters were so incensed by the notice they walked up the two storeys to the Dickens suite, where all comers were barred by locked doors and all questions neatly deflected by the few waiters who emerged. Asked who the guests were and whether any ministers attended, the dinner's host, Mr Martin Liptrott, British *repres*entative of Philip Morris, was suitably discreet.

"It was a private occasion," he explained.

'Backbiter'

29 Number crunchings

% of country supporting William Hague's Conservative Party

% of Conservative Party supporting William Hague as leader

PREPARE TO MEET THY DOME

PETER MANDELSON has misled at least 120 MPs and their constituents over how hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), powerful greenhouse gases, came to be used in the air conditioning system of the millennium dome rather than more environmentally friendly alternatives (see *Eye* 952).

HFCs, although more ozone-friendly than their notorious predecessors, CFCs, still contribute to global warming — the "greenhouse effect". Systems based on gases such as ammonia and propane are just as efficient and less damaging to the environment, yet will be absent from the supposedly "state of the art" dome.

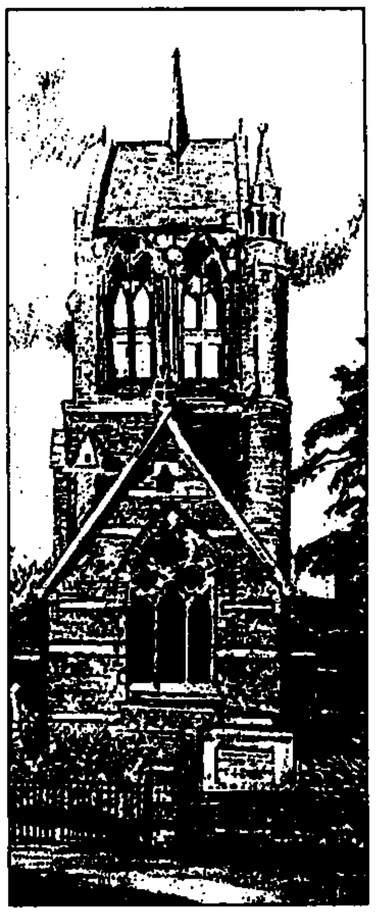
Many MPs have passed on their constituents' concerns over the use of HFCs to Mandelson. His standard reply states that the use of HFCs was "not specified" in the ad inviting tenders for the dome's air conditioning. True: but companies who did tender for the work were subsequently told that the actual specification for the work *did* require the use of HFCs.

Dr Stephen Forbes Pearson, a director of Star Refrigeration of Glasgow, has confirmed that Star was told by Dome contractors McAlpine-Laing that "unless they submitted a compliant quotation, that is, one making use of R134a [*an HFC gas*] their quotation would not be considered. Star were given permission to quote a more environmentally-friendly alternative, which they did at the same time as quoting to the specification. The alternative quotation was ignored." Dr Forbes Pearson politely sums up Mandelson's letter to MPs as "factually correct but misleading".

The point of sticking with HFCs, apart from cost, is that Mandelson and Jennifer Page, the chief executive of the New Millennium Experience Company, are terrified that the dome will not be finished on time. Better to have a dirty dome on New Year's Day 2000, the thinking goes, than a clean one on 2 January.

NOOKS and CORNERS

HUNDREDS of years ago, in *Eye* 802, I discussed the sad but all too typical case of Wythall Parish Church in Worcestershire. St Mary's Wythall was — *is* — a building of 1862 designed by Frederick Preedy with a magnificent tower added in 1903 by the great Birmingham architect, W.H. Bidlake. The church — listed grade II — was closed in 1986 because of fears about the stability of the tower (it still stands) and its redundancy confirmed in 1992.



The diocese of Birmingham was adamant that, despite the wishes of the parish, the building would never be used for ecclesiastical purposes again. Instead, it would be sold off to Ashdale Investments Ltd for "office and ancillary purposes". A floor would be inserted into the church and the churchyard made into a giant car park. This last proposal caused such outrage locally that it was reduced to one holding a mere 24 cars which involved removing only 85 graves — including that of Miss Emily Mynors who, poor deluded soul, had left her entire estate to the Church of England (worth about £1m today).

Well, that is how things stood in 1992. I return to Wythall again because of what has happened since. For the following year a local inquiry was held into an appeal by Ashdale Investments against Bromsgrove district council for its failure to approve the plans to mutilate the church and churchyard. The department of the environment's inspector was unequivocal in his conclusions that, "the insertion of a mezzanine floor would constitute a radical alteration to the internal character of the building, destroying its spatial quality and architectural form, and undermining its historic value... the damage to the interior of the building amounts to a significant objection to the proposal"; and that the car park "would damage the inherent historic and scenic value of the churchyard". The plans were rejected.

In 1995 Ashdale Investments returned to the attack, but with much more sympathetic proposals: the mezzanine floor had gone and the car park was now for a mere 12 cars. Even so, local opposition continued unabated, particularly in view of the fact that the planning inspector had wondered whether the proposed conversion represented "the only practicable scheme that is likely to emerge. I have concluded that this is not the case. It seems to me that there is a reasonable prospect of a more sympathetic scheme being formulated, either by changes to the appeal project, or by the implementation of a community use of the kind advocated by Wythall Parish Council and the Friends of St Mary's Church".

So a proposal was also made to convert the church for community use — which did not require planning permission or a car park as, amazingly, the church was in community use before. But what it did require was the approval of the Birmingham diocesan board of finance which, of course, was not forthcoming. As we saw in the *Eye* 959 with regard to St John's, Hanley, the Church of England prefers to see its redundant plant used to make money.

So, in its wisdom, in March 1997 Bromsgrove district council approved the revised plans by Ashdale Investments — on condition that work would begin within 12 months. By March this year nothing had happened and no structural report had been submitted. And then, in July, Ashdale Investments submitted amended plans which — surprise, surprise — contain a mezzanine floor to go inside the church. So will the diocese of Birmingham and its favoured agent, Ashdale Investments Ltd, succeed in having their wicked way with poor old St Mary's Wythall by deviousness and stealth? Watch this space.

But the real question is this. For over a decade the people of Wythall have simply wanted to see their proud Victorian church restored and brought back into use as the parish church of Wythall. Why is that completely unacceptable to the Bishop of Birmingham?

***SOMETIMES** of course sanity does win through. Over the last three years I have several times referred to the plan fomented by North Norfolk district council and Sheringham town council to enhance the heritage of Sheringham by building a new heritage lifeboat museum which involves the demolition of about the only real bit of "heritage" left in the town in the shape of three authentic old fishermen's sheds (Eyes passim ad nauseam).*

So I am very pleased to report that, at long last, Sheringham town council has bowed to local opinion and withdrawn the application to demolish these (listed) buildings. Councillor John Lown, who moved to abandon the bureaucrats' pet scheme, said: "The saga had become a ridiculous story that would be deemed unbelievable if it was put forward as a soap opera." Quite.

'Piloti'

CHURCH NEWS

A JUDGMENT is expected within days in the appeal of Westminster Abbey organist Martin Neary, who was sacked in April for "financial irregularities".

The case — a simple employment dispute which could have been settled in a day by an industrial tribunal at minimal cost — has so far dragged out over three weeks. The hearing before retired Law Lord Jauncey of Tullichettle has been taking place in the splendid surroundings of the judicial chamber of the privy council in Downing Street, thanks to the abbey's special status under a statute of 1560 which provides that the organist, if sacked by the dean and chapter, may appeal to the queen.

On the lord chancellor's advice the queen appointed Lord Jauncey as a special commissioner to hear the case — in secret, of course. The whole Byzantine pantomime has so far cost the abbey £400,000 and Neary £150,000 — and m'learned friends' meters are still running.

Neary will almost certainly win his case, for the dean, Dr Wesley Carr ("Wan Carr" as he is affectionately known to the boys of Westminster School) has no evidence of genuine financial irregularity. The case is all about a clash of two inflated egos — and nowhere do such disputes fester quite so putridly as in the church.

The burden of the abbey's case so far has been that Neary was a bit pompous and had delusions of grandeur — tiresome, no doubt, but not proof that he is a thief. Carr has been inviting abbey employees to testify that Neary was beastly to them and they always knew that he was a wrong 'un. Desperate stuff — but Carr is an increasingly desperate man. If Neary wins and insists on having his job back — which he will — the pressure on Carr and his lieutenants to resign will be enormous. His only hope of survival would be if Lord Jauncey were persuaded that no one else at the abbey could stand working with Neary either and imposes a settlement — a huge payoff for Neary linked to a vow of silence.

Meanwhile the abbey has been making valiantly Stalinist efforts to airbrush Neary out of its history. The choir photo on the abbey's website has been changed — the new picture, almost identical to the old, shows the acting organist in Neary's place. His recordings with the choir have been removed from the abbey bookshop. The paranoia has even extended to the abbey's services: at evensong on Sunday 4 October verse seven was omitted from Psalm 141 because it could have been taken to refer to the dispute:

'Let their judges be overthrown in stony places: that they may hear my words, for they are sweet.'

Allelujah!

BBC News Review

BBC news executives are so obsessed with *News At Ten* it's a wonder they didn't use Big Ben when revealing the results of their 18-month review of news and current affairs coverage.

Head of news Tony Hall could have announced: "*Bong!* Six o'clock bulletin aimed at simpletons while Nine targets eggheads! *Bong!* Revamp will favour newsreaders who are 'warm' and trusted by public! *Bong!* Half of every *Nine* bulletin will come from overseas! And so on.

The important thing to point out is that the review ends two ancient traditions in British news broadcasting.

The first is the introduction of a kind of information apartheid. The original Reithian idea of the BBC was that the same material would be offered to the entire audience. This gradually disappeared from drama and docs, which introduced targeted programming, but has survived thus far in BBC1 news bulletins.

Now, the information stream will divide. Viewers of the *Six*, with Grinner Dando and Simper Lewis, will get mortgages, princesses and miracle babies fighting for life. Viewers of the *Nine*, with Scowler Buerk, will get Rwanda, George Soros and Stockhausen's birthday. There are all kinds of nasty class assumptions behind this — the *Six* is for those who clock off at five and come home for tea; the *Nine* is for those who catch the 8.12 from the City — but it marks the death of a governing principle of the BBC.

The other historic shift is likely to have downmarket consequences for all bulletins. For a long time, by a gentlemanly agreement behind the scenes, no two rival news bulletins have been scheduled against each other in Britain. This was intended to reduce competitive (and almost always downmarket) pressure on news shows. Now, though, the agreement is over. BBC1's new hour-long show at six will go head to head with ITV when *News At Ten* shifts forward to 6.30pm. ITV will then put in a later bulletin at 11pm... and *Newsnight* will incorporate an 11pm news and sports bulletin. Britain's first TV news war is brewing which, if newspapers are any guide, will not increase seriousness.

In its emphasis on the importance of "warmer" presentation, especially at 6pm, the review suggests a worrying confirmation of the Martyn Lewis-inspired drive towards more "good" news. Recently, for example, the BBC splashed on the fact that a big plane order from BA would mean "thousands of jobs for Britain" as if the airline were somehow acting altruistically. The chief executive had made it very clear that they went where the work was cheapest.

The news executives' other mistake is to have created a cult of the newsreader, through the various focus groups deciding whether Justin Webb is too posh or Edward Stourton too solemn. The cult can only have the effect of encouraging huge pay demands by presenters who get the nod from the focus group. Yet the truth is that the BBC news bulletins have achieved virtually identical ratings for nearly 20 years, no matter who reads the autocue. The audience for news is mainly event-led. If there is a huge news story on a day when Nicholas Witchell is fronting, he may get twice as many viewers as Jill Dando on a slow day. This does not mean Witchell is twice as attractive as Dando.

In the same way, the million or so extra viewers *News At Ten* attracts over the BBC's *Nine O'Clock News* is now assumed by BBC execs to be the result of a personality cult developing around Trevor McDonald. Alan Yentob even led a campaign recently to lure the hugely paid 58-year-old to the BBC.

But the most likely reason for the disparity is that the tabloid *News At Ten* — with sport and royal stories on average three places higher in the running order than at the Beeb — is inevitably going to attract more viewers. If Trevor *had* gone to the BBC and conducted long two-ways with Peter Jay on interest rates, the fan club would soon be dismantled.

Finally, when Hall was questioned on rumours that Anna Ford was to be focus-grouped-out, he replied indignantly that "Anna's a friend" and would be okay. Did he really mean that friendship with the head of news guarantees employment?

'Square Eyes'

THE useless Chris Evans breakfast show opened on Sky only to be completely overshadowed by the Duchess of York's tasteful chat show.

That won't have pleased Sky boss Elisabeth Murdoch's father, whom Sky staff believe was less than impressed when he learnt that his daughter had signed up to sponsor as well as simulcast Evans's Virgin radio programme.

Ms Murdoch ludicrously overpaid the Ginger Git, something which Rupert apparently blames on the malign influence of her boyfriend, the PR person Matthew Freud whose clients just happen to include Chris Evans.

Sky staff are nervous about how many subscribers will switch on their tvs to see Evans obscured by a microphone, talking over the start of records and crashing jingles. With Rupert watching carefully to see how his money is spent, Freud's relationship with Elisabeth may well come under severe paternal pressure should Evans cock things up more than usual.

MEDIA NEWS

THE craven self promotion of micro-skirted BBC arts correspondent Rosie Millard catapulted her on to page three of the *Daily Mail* earlier this month.

Some bloke in Aberdeen had apparently taken a fancy to her and started a website dedicated to what he termed the "voice of naffness". Millard, who seemed to take this as a compliment, told the Mail her husband didn't like there being a website dedicated to his beloved. This was surprising as they had both been telling everyone they met about it.

Sadly the site does not record her grilling on the Today programme by her colleague John Humphrys, who seemed less than impressed that Millard justified her views on the National Theatre's Oklahoma with the informed view "well, that's what it says in the programme".

She told the Mail she would like to take over Barry Norman's television role — which caused merriment at the BBC where Millard does not even get to cover the Oscars.

Plugged In

"Do adjust your set. The future in television has arrived. Digital TV, so long the subject of speculation and conjecture on the technological pages of newspapers and magazines, is here. And with the launch today of SkyDigital, the first of at least three British digital TV broadcasters, we all have another 200 or so channels to choose from. What is it? How does it work?... to answer these questions, *The Times* has put together this magazine. Once you have read it, you, like the images on a digitalised television, will have a clearer picture."

"Digital Times", free with the Times

(Submitted by Richard Wolfe)

"Fun-loving Chris Evans brought his wacky brand of humour to breakfast telly yesterday as his radio show was broadcast live on Sky. And the zany Virgin boss scored an instant hit... BBC bosses missed the chance of stealing a march on Sky when they begged Chris to do an early morning slot on BBC2 while he was working for Radio 1. Chris said: "But that's not really taking your b***s in your hands so I said no. Sky are being very brave. It's fun and it's exciting."

The Sun

"Fergie made an impressive debut as a TV host yesterday — interviewing people who have undergone terrible ordeals."

The Sun, giving the Duchess of York her only complimentary review

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

"THE BBC will act as guardian of standards in the digital age, bringing you only quality programming and taking care of all our licence fee payer's interests," boasts the Beeb's snazzy new internet site devoted to the new digital channel BBC Choice.

How spending £200m on a service it is impossible for anyone to watch can be in licencepayers' interests, the site does not record. Nor will those contacting the BBC's special "digital hotline" be any the wiser. When asked how many people in the UK could actually watch the service, the hotline operator said: "Not many, I shouldn't think."

In fact the answer was: however many people had rushed out to sign up for rival Sky's digital package, which went on sale a week *later*. BBC Choice has in fact bounced Channel Five out of the record books by being the first ever TV channel to launch itself to a possible audience of zero.

Anyone looking in *Radio Times* to see what they are missing might be intrigued by the channel's *sports* coverage, which claims to involve "live reaction" and "live discussion from the fans". So who, from an audience of almost zero, was ringing in to take part? From the hotline came the answer: "Er, pass."

But licencepayers can comfort themselves that one of the channel's inaugural programmes was an extended edition of *Tomorrow's World* devoted to the phenomenon of, er, digital television. This was watched with interest by the staff of the BBC's digital wing, who received the show via a direct feed from the studios. In other words, the only people who could watch the show were the ones who didn't need to watch it anyway.

MIRROR Group chief executive David Montgomery wasn't in a very good mood at the Labour conference in Blackpool.

He arrived from Belfast and immediately humiliated his editor Piers Morgan by publicly attacking the *Mirror*'s lack of total sycophancy towards Tony Blair. Rommel was not motivated solely by a desire to ingratiate himself with the prime minister, however. He was also deeply frustrated at goings-on in his Ulster homeland.

Earlier this year when Kelvin MacKenzie was still the *Mirror*'s editorial supremo, Kelvin appointed his brother Craig as editor-in-chief of Mirror Group Ireland, an innocuous sounding post that is close to Montgomery's heart. As well as running dire Ulster and Irish editions of all the *Mirror* titles, Belfast-based Craig now reluctantly finds himself in charge of the Unionist *Newsletter* paper and the Nationalist *Derry Journal*.

Rommel also fancies adding local broadcasters to his Irish mini-empire, which some suggest he would be allowed to keep if City investors tire of Mirror Group's underperformance and force Rommel out. His demand to take the Belfast bits with him is unlikely to be refused.

Montgomery was therefore furious to learn that Kelvin MacKenzie has been negotiating to take control of a chain of four radio stations owned by jailed rapist Owen Oyston and centred around Belfast's CityBeat FM. Since leaving the group, Kelvin has been trying to get back into broadcasting supported financially by Rupert Murdoch. With Oyston a forced seller following the appeal court's decision to uphold his conviction, Kelvin made a takeover bid for the stations through the trustees who are running the jailed socialist millionaire's business in his absence.

Money has so far prevented any deal, with MacKenzie refusing to meet Oyston's typically excessive demands. But the involvement of Kelvin, his editor-in-chief's brother, in a media deal in his beloved Ulster has infuriated Montgomery and relations with Craig have cooled.

Though Rommel may covet the radio stations himself, with L!VE tv running at a huge loss not even Mirror Group's long suffering institutional shareholders will tolerate their money being used to fund such a takeover. Thus Morgan caught the full blast of his boss's frustration.

Oyston's staff say their jailed employer is confident that if Kelvin fails to return with a higher bid Mohamed Fayed will buy the stations through his disastrous Liberty Media operation. Kelvin is also considering a bid for Atlantic 252, the long wave pop station based over the Irish border.

TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

CAN Mohamed Fayed and the late Cap'n Bob by any chance be related?

A fat, lying egomaniac with a taste for luxury yachts, private helicopters and second-rate football clubs — and a curious penchant for fancy-dress and silly hats... it all sounds uncomfortably familiar. Unlike Maxwell, however, Fayed has never shown any interest in cultivating politicians in the former Soviet states.

Until now, that is. The charming photograph on the left shows the phoney pharaoh togged out in Mongolian native costume while visiting Ulan Bator last month — where, while not watching horse races and wrestling matches, he dazzled local bigwigs with his amazing wealth and generosity.

Mohamed Fayed's main interest in Mongolia lies underground: his new company Harrods Minerals Mongolia has already begun prospecting for metals in Bayankhongor and Omnogobi. But he may have grander ambitions. "We are only investing in the mining sector at this time," he told the acting prime minister, Ts Elbegdorj. "But we may move into other operations later. One area of interest is the Russia to China gas pipeline..."

A local paper, the *Mongol Messenger*, reports that the "multi-billionaire" (sic) told his hosts "how much he appreciated Mongolian hospitality and nature. 'I am really impressed with the countryside and your young jockeys. Maybe I will come back and build my own Mongolian village,' he joked. But no one laughed."

Indeed not: his listeners suddenly realised, to their horror, that the old brute might be serious.

MOHAMED FAYED, the phoney pharaoh, has become a touch sensitive about his relationship with the Rev Guy Bennett, suspended last month as rector of Oxted in Surrey after he was charged with committing two offences of indecent assault.

Following the deaths of Dodi and Di the Rev Bennett was one of the first to offer sympathy to Fayed. In April Fayed accepted an invitation from

Bennett to plant two trees in St Mary's Churchyard, Oxted, in memory of the crash victims. The ceremony consolidated their friendship and Fayed took kindly to Bennett's requests for donations to help the needy.

However, the arrest of Bennett led the local paper, the *Surrey Mirror*, to print a photograph of Fayed and Bennett taken at the tree planting ceremony. Despite the accompanying article making it clear that the photo was taken in April, Fayed immediately wrote to the paper to complain that the caption should also have stated the date.

An apology for any distress caused to Fayed duly appeared in the *Surrey Mirror*, though it is hard to fathom what advantage the flawed pharaoh hopes to gain by emphasising that the photo was taken only six months ago.

The Rev Bennett, who is due to appear before Reigate magistrates on 29 October, may think twice before deciding whether or not it is a good idea to ask Fayed to be a character witness on his behalf. With Fayed seemingly keen to distance himself from Bennett, his letter of complaint to the *Surrey Mirror* ends ambiguously by stating in his overblown manner: "I do not abandon my friends, even when they are in trouble charged with crimes which I — like all right-minded people — condemn in the strongest terms."

ARE Alex Salmond and his Scottish National party ready for the unbridled support on offer from Mohamed Fayed?

In a long interview with the Glasgow *Herald*, the Harrods owner, long denied a British passport, made a pitch for Celtic nationality while setting out his nationalist sympathies.

"I have been badly treated by the English, but in Scotland everyone treats me like a king. Maybe if you have your independence you will give me a Scottish passport? I am in favour of independence. You are a different people," he pleaded.

Only a cynic would suggest that Fayed is currying favour with nationalists in the hope that any future Scottish parliament might decide to exempt his 68,000 acres of land at Balnagowan from planned curbs on absentee landlords.

Meanwhile it is far from clear what Salmond will make of Fayed's views on the occasional local practice of wearing kilts. "I think it was copied from dress worn by the Egyptian pharaohs, that you stole it from us," said Fayed. "The Egyptians wore nothing underneath. They were free. That is why they were great fuckers. But when you leave your organs free and ventilated with air, they are always fertile. That is why the Irish have so many kids."

Diana balls

"Bruce Willis says he can't even sit down and watch the TV news these days. 'I'm on a news blackout,' he says. 'I just can't watch it any more. It's too disturbing... The world was shocked and horrified by the death of Princess Diana. But we're inundated with so much sadness that nothing seems to matter any more'."

— Interview in *Bella* magazine

"I have lived in Exeter for 15 years and have passed through Princesshay on numerous occasions on my way to the cathedral. I have yet to set foot in any of the Princesshay shops... Princesshay should be demolished immediately and replaced by a much needed multi-storey car park, perhaps named in honour of Princess Diana. The Princess Dianahay car park should be made free for our hard-up students to reduce the parking problems they suffer."

— Reader's letter to the Exeter *Express & Echo*.

"The 'Mythical Diana Ring' is the symbol of an exceptional woman and the symbol of supreme sophistication. It's patterned after Diana's engagement ring and... contains a genuine sapphire... as soon as you wear this ring, it draws attention and arouses admiration. Cost: $19.95, $4.50 S&H."

— *USA Today*.

DOING THE ROUNDS

Focus on Kent and Canterbury

PEOPLE in East Kent opposing the proposed downgrading of Kent and Canterbury NHS trust to a cottage hospital (*Eye* 959) are not amused by the health authority's submission to health secretary Frank Dobson.

The document, *The Future of Health Services in East Kent*, summarised the public consultation process and included a classification of local organisations as "supportive", "concerned" and "non-supportive".

Thus far 22 such organisations have complained that they were mislabelled as "concerned" when their true stance is most definitely "non-supportive".

The Oaten Hill and District Society described it as "a gross misrepresentation... clearly factually inaccurate and misleading". Ian Swales, leader of the Labour group on Canterbury city council, was "stunned, amazed and angered" and described the submission as "flawed".

Canterbury Christ Church College is "aghast at what appears to be a cynical misuse of our material bordering on dishonesty". Dr Roz Waller, from Wye Surgery, was "very angry and dismayed"; and Dr T. Stefani, from Whitstable Medical Practice, observed that "any normal person would read our submission and put it in the non-supportive category. I think this says legions about the way EKHA have conducted the whole of their consultation procedure".

Dr J.M. Ribchester, from the local GP Multifund, was more conciliatory — "we are all concerned" — but added: "The hospital services in East Kent would not be viable with the loss of 400 beds and the only way forward is to keep all three hospitals free from any major downgrading."

East Kent health authority (EKHA) strongly denies the claims of bias and communications manager Alison Pemberton has sent a guarded warning to Nick Eden-Green, of the Oaten Hill committee, for making his feelings public. "The authority has no particular wish to assert its legal rights, but I am sure you will appreciate that future coverage will have to be kept under close review."

Why is EKHA so touchy? Could it be that no one has yet been able to advance convincing quality-of-care arguments for butchering Kent and Canterbury? The trust is currently the biggest training centre in the south-east outside London. Its cancer, renal and neurosciences departments are nationally recognised, and the haemophilia centre is

"You've got Athletes Foot"

the only one in England not attached to a medical school.

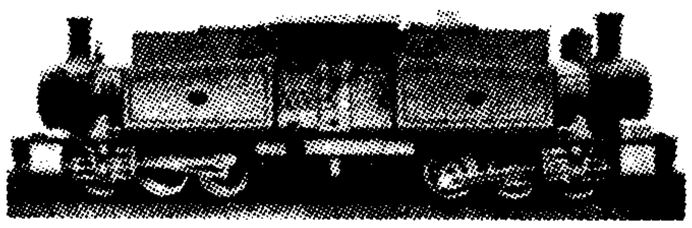
There is massive local opposition to the plan and it is hard to see it as anything other than a cost cutting measure. And EKHA needs the money. It has already underwritten a private finance initiative to develop the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother hospital in Margate. Pulling out now could incur a £5m penalty; continuing will be even more expensive. So it's bye bye Canterbury.

Or is it? Before Dobbo makes his decision he should look at the disastrous results of the April 1997 decimation of another leading acute hospital, Queen Mary's University hospital in Roehampton (*Eyes passim*). The transfer of services to other hospitals in south-west London was projected to save £9m but has in fact achieved very little other than severely denting the local population's confidence in the NHS.

Sue Gallagher, chief executive of Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth HA, blames the lack of savings on "inadvertent double counting... incomplete classification of transitional costs and a £1m shortfall in the trust that runs St Mary's". Meanwhile, nearby Kingston hospital has had to take on the load from St Mary's. How is it coping? Ninety acute beds have just been shut due to a nursing shortage.

If more evidence were needed, the controversial transfer of services between Edgware and Barnet general hospitals was predicted in 1995 to save £13.7m. The real saving has been £100,000.

M.D.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on North Western Trains

THE cockeyed logic of delivering Britain's generally healthy rail network into the hands of the fast-buck bus managers is wreaking havoc in the north-west.

When FirstGroup, a giant bus firm bloated on mergers and acquisitions, wanted to get its paws on the huge profits of Great Western Trains last spring, the catch was that it would also have to take sister franchise North Western Trains, which is far from lucrative.

Before the takeover NWT might have been considered one of the better performing regional franchises. Overnight it was plunged into staff reductions, mass cancellations, delays and closure of booking offices. Seizing the soonest opportunity, FirstGroup put up many fares by well over the rate of inflation at the end of last month. It also plans service cuts in May, its earliest opportunity to butcher NWT's timetables.

FirstGroup's measures seem so detrimental to the franchise's longterm health that some staff wonder if it is expecting to off-load NWT soon, either through choice or compulsion. The government wants train operators to show extra commitment to services and passengers, but NWT is heading in the opposite direction; either FirstGroup or the government will have to give way if NWT is to remain in FirstGroup's hands.

When the former British Rail managers at Great Western bid for NWT on the basis of a rapidly falling subsidy, the apparent intention was to keep NWT afloat in the early years by cross-subsidy, if necessary, from Great Western Trains — the second most profitable franchise of all. FirstGroup, lusting for profits, refuses to cross-subsidise and insists on each of its business divisions returning a fat annual surplus.

The upshot is that FirstGroup is using one hand to cut costs savagely at NWT while pocketing huge corporate profits with the other. Last year it made an operating profit of £96m, yet it cannot find the relatively small sum needed to keep NWT on an even keel.

The Great Western takeover deal could have been vetoed by Opraf, the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising. The onus last spring was on FirstGroup to prove it deserved the franchises but Opraf was duped by FirstGroup's pathetic commitments (such as paying *half* the cost of refurbishing tiny bus-type trains on Merseyside) when it might have insisted on guarantees that FirstGroup would not cut services or raise fares above inflation.

Watchful passenger transport executives largely protect NWT's metropolitan focal points from abuse but this forces FirstGroup to concentrate its attacks on areas such as Cheshire, north Wales and the Peak District where passengers rely on Opraf for protection. Opraf is so utterly useless at fighting the passenger's corner that many fares in those areas have suddenly risen — some by 13 percent — as a prelude to a host of likely service cuts next spring.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

FACED with rock-bottom prices for major commodities, public and political hostility and ever more environmental legislation, including the threat of a pesticide tax, farming could be said to be in a hole. Then with one bound... it is free! The solution apparently lies with something called integrated crop management (ICM).

With its very own conference last week this exciting and totally new concept came of age. A plethora of groups and studies with an interest in ICM have appeared of late with snappy acronyms such as LIFE and LINK. But easily the busiest is LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), better known in the trade as LARF. Its mission is "a viable agriculture which is environmentally and socially acceptable and ensures the continuity of supply of wholesome, affordable food whilst conserving and enhancing the fabric and wildlife of the British countryside for future generations".

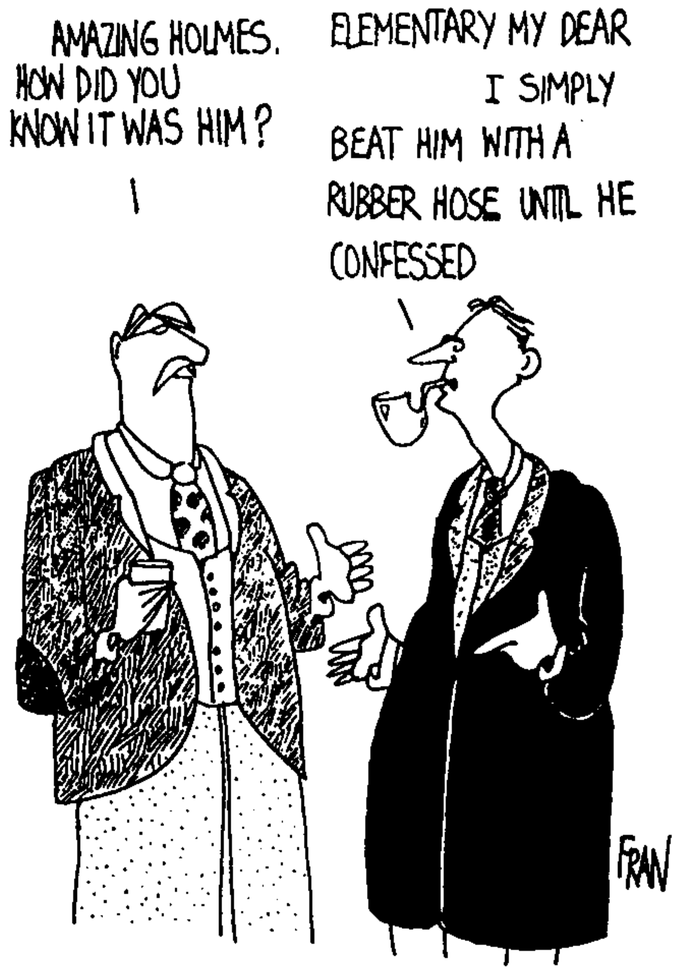
Splendid. But since this is the exact opposite of what mainstream farming has been up to, ICM must be pretty radical stuff. So what actually is it? Well, although not *exactly* organic farming, ICM "combines the best of traditional farming methods with appropriate modern technology". This, it turns out, means spraying everything as usual but also using such original ideas as, er, crop rotation, not damaging the soil and only using as much pesticide as is actually needed. There is not one technique that any half-decent farmer doesn't use already.

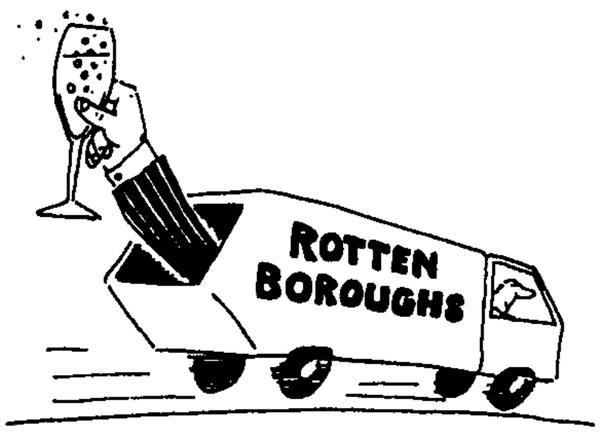
What LARF's version of ICM is not, is a serious attempt to reduce inputs: its own case study on ICM wheat growing shows precisely no reduction in pesticide use. But then LEAF/LARF's executive committee and advisory board aren't overburdened with members likely to criticise current farming practice, and its sponsors include all the major fertiliser and spray manufacturers scrambling on board what they see as a timely lifeboat.

The Mr Big behind this repackaging exercise is David Richardson, chief pundit in *Farmers Weakly* and chairman of LARF. Always one to know which way the wind is blowing — he does most of the puffing himself — he is also well placed to understand the problems facing intensive farming. In his spare time he is a director of Sentry Farming Group, which is not renowned for its sensitive management and suffered a profits and share collapse last year.

One of Richardson's pet hates is organic farming, while his current passion is genetically modified (GM) crops. This makes him an unusual head for an environmental charity and it may prove a difficult position to sustain. When Monsanto used his name as one of those "behind GM technology" it thoughtfully put the LEAF logo underneath — a gesture which left the few real conservationists on the LARF advisory board feeling distinctly queasy.

'Gumboot'





Wales

A DAMNING report by the district auditor into the activities of Anglesey county council concludes that officers in the housing and property department failed to meet the standards demanded of those serving the public.

"A recurring theme running through the report is the questionable actions and relationships of certain officers with third parties," it says (see *Eyes passim*).

Technical assistant Paul Roberts awarded his brother's business partner contracts totalling £171,493 over four years. Yet the company, Cefni Glass, was consistently in rent arrears on a council-owned unit and still owes the council £2,000 for equipment.

Roberts also wangled himself a building plot on council land and got contractors to work on the site cheaply or for free. A contractor who relied on the council for work was given the impression that if he pursued Mr Roberts to settle his debt (£2,000) he would receive fewer orders in future.

The auditor questioned the motives of Berwyn Owen, assistant director of housing, who allocated a business grant of £18,584 to a local computer company. The grant was to "expand the operation and create local employment". But the company used the money to relocate to the south of England. Owen admitted he was a friend of two of the company's directors, attended college with one of them and one had been best man at his wedding.

The council has since suspended Paul Roberts and Berwyn Owen; and Gareth Roberts is no longer employed by the council.

The auditor was surprised matters were not picked up at a higher level. But perhaps he should not have been. Director of housing John Arthur Jones himself faces various charges of misconduct in public office, intimidating witnesses and attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Elsewhere in the principality, 18 current and former councillors in **Blaenau Gwent** have been arrested in one of Inspector Dai Knacker's biggest ever municipal clean-ups. The 18 have been linked with dodgy expense claims for attending conferences and Knacker is sifting through the evidence.

No fewer than 15 of the politicians belong to Labour ("Council corruption is unacceptable, not on, not in any circumstances, not for any reason," — T. Blair). Those arrested included Monmouthshire county council chairman Tony Carrington, Blaenau Gwent mayor Colin Jones and former council leader Bernard Assinder. All deny any wrongdoing.

Leeds

LEEDS city council has voted in favour of a huge leisure, sporting and hotel development next to Leeds United's Elland Road stadium, as predicted in *Eye* 947.

The money-spinning £50m scheme, put forward by the club's owners, Leeds Sporting plc, has attracted strong opposition from long-suffering residents around the ground who fear increased traffic, nuisance and noise. The decision is good news though for Leeds Sporting's major shareholders — such as, er, Leeds city council.

The ball is now at the feet of deputy prime minister John Prescott, who in his environment secretary hat has the power to "call in" the controversial application which has already been considered so thoroughly by the city's unbiased councillors (who receive handfuls of free tickets for United's home games).

Glasgow

WHEN caretakers at 250 of Glasgow's high rise flats announced that they were going on strike, the response from housing director David Comley, chairman James McCarron and eight other senior colleagues was swift.

They flew to Bruges — well, Portugal, anyway — for a very important international housing junket even though they had known for a couple of weeks that the trip would clash with the strike.

While the caretakers took the day off vandals moved in and caused £100,000 worth of damage. Fortunately the cost can be met out of the £370,000 worth of cuts which led to the strike in the first place. The taxpayers' bill for the trip to the sun was a piddling £5,000 in comparison.

Kingston

KINGSTON council's policy and resources committee meets this week to consider sacking of the world's worst computer company, EDS (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Councillors who awarded EDS the contract to administer council tax and housing benefit (HB) in the borough saw council rent arrears hit £1.16m in August and nearly £1.18m in September, despite repeated assurances from EDS that "effective action" was being taken to sort things out. Last month fed-up Wandsworth sacked EDS from a similar role.

An EDS spokesman squirmed deliciously: "Because of the learning curve and the database rebuild, there has been an expected productivity dip which has led to some backlogs."

Lambeth

TWO years ago auditors in Lambeth reported that £250,000 of mostly taxpayers' money in a £1.5m scheme to revamp Atlantic Road in Brixton had been squandered. The scheme was managed by the South London Family Housing Association (SLFHA) and was supposed to revitalise the area, scene of riots in the 80s, by creating jobs and renovating empty shops and houses.

As a result of the findings the relationship between the council and the SLFHA was called into question by members of all three parties on the then hung council. At the time councillors stopped short of axing other schemes in train with the SLFHA, but ruled out entering into new arrangements with the association.

Two years on, however, with a Labour administration firmly in charge, 700 properties in Stockwell's Lansdowne Green Estate have been transferred lock, stock and barrel from the council to, er... the South London Family Housing Association.

Islington

WHEN former neighbourhood services director Jean Dolphin left the council last year, town hall unions staged a demonstration outside her leaving bash protesting against her £115,000 pay-off.

The unions now have even more to complain about: tucked inside the council's annual accounts, just released, is news that three other senior officers also recently received between £80,000 and £90,000 in golden handshakes.

The accounts disclose that in the last financial year the number of council employees earning more than £40,000 rose from 68 to 80, with the wage bill rising from £3.2m to more than £4m. Luckily Islington has debts of just, er, £818m.

Moray

MORAY council chief executive Tony Connell has been sacked from his £70,000-a-year post for gross misconduct (ie fiddling his expenses), the first senior local government officer in Scotland to be dismissed since reorganisation in 1996. Perhaps to ease the pain of dismissal he has received a £20,000 golden handshake and "significant help" with legal expenses.

Pseuds Corner

Happy 75th birthday, dear *Radio Times*. In our household, we always pronounce your name "raddy-o-timmeez", as if it were Greek: rather learned, rather fun, rather fab, just like you.

JOANNA LUMLEY
Radio Times

In the garden, half-hidden among the hostas, sits a chimera, a Homeric mythic animal — part-lion, part-goat, part-snake. By the front door are two busts — he [A.N. Wilson] places his hats on a marble Milton, she [Ruth Guilding] places hers on a plaster Minerva. The rest of the ground floor is given over to Wilson's study, where the walls are papered over with the heads of Roman emperors and every alcove is lined with maroon bookshelves featuring innumerable learned hardbacks, leather-bound volumes and still more heads, including a copy of Keats's death-mask and a faintly worrying "life-mask", a mould of A.N. Wilson's snub-nosed features in repose.

AMANDA MITCHISON
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

Nothing has changed — and yet everything is new. That's the paradoxical brilliance defining the latest, fifth-generation BMW 3 Series. Think of it this way: the original concept of the 3 Series remains unblemished, ineffable, crisply focused and sharply balanced. That's the wrapping, chic and discreet. Inside, the filling is freshly cooked,

more flavoursome, relentlessly gourmet. Make no mistake, this car is all new, yet reassuringly familiar. And what does familiarity breed? In BMW's case, expectation.

RUSSELL BULGIN
BMW Magazine

As I've got older I hate any injustice. I feel like going up to Stephen Lawrence's dad and saying, 'Sorry about what happened, mate, come out and have a pint.'

JIM DAVIDSON
The Sun

The Postmodern Brain
Gordon G. Globus (University of California, Irvine)
This interdisciplinary work discloses an unexpected coherence between recent concepts in brain science and postmodern thought. A nonlinear dynamical model of brain states is viewed as an autopoietic, autorhoetic, self-organizing, self-tuning eruption under multiple constraints and guided by an overarching optimization principle which insures conservation of invariances and enhancement of symmetries. The nonlinear dynamical brain as developed shows quantum nonlocality, undergoes chaotic regimes, and does not compute. Heidegger and Derrida are 'appropriated' as dynamical theorists who are concerned respectively with the movement of time and being *(Ereignis)* and text *(Différance)*. The chasm between postmodern thought and the thoroughly metaphysical theory that the brain computes is breached, once the nonlinear dynamical framework is adopted. The book is written in a postmodern style, making playful, opportunistic use of marginalia and dreams, and presenting a nonserial surface of broken complexity.

Publisher's catalogue

CONTRIBUTORS: Raymond Banning, Gnome, Jeremy Knox, Dave Trott, Dave Rose.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Fuck off

Sir,

We act for Ladbroke Group PLC which has noted the references to it in an article in the In the City section of the 2 October 1998 issue of PRIVATE EYE. *Insofar as* PRIVATE EYE *is able, please disclose to us on behalf of Ladbroke Group PLC* PRIVATE EYE*'s sources and any specific allegations that have been made to it.*

Yours faithfully,
S.J. BERWIN & CO,

London WC1.

Max factor

Sir,

*I was appalled to read your attack of my company "Slappers International" (*EYE *960) which totally misrepresented our aims, aspirations and achievements in the 10 years since the company came into being.*

We at Slappers can of course fully justify our revelations on the grounds of public interest. Who could possibly forget the far-reaching impact of such Slapper inspired stories as "Dirty Des Scores Six Times at Home and Away", "I had Tinky's Winky", "Bum-faced Carling's Diana Obsession" and "What Michael Winner Had in His Huge Baggy Y-Fronts"? These stories are great examples of investigative journalism at its best. Our standard 90 percent commission on all media payments to slappers is but a small recompense for such invaluable information.

Such has been the huge success of our public service initiatives that we at Slappers have been forced to move to much larger premises from our humble Streatham Trading Estate origins. I would be obliged if you could therefore print our new address and at the same time inform potential clients not to send us their compromising pictures as we prefer to take our own.

Yours faithfully,
MAX CLIFFORD,

Max Clifford Associates Ltd, 109 New Bond Street, London W1Y 9AA. Tel: 0171 408 2350, Fax: 0171 409 2294.

Lookalike

Doris

Donk

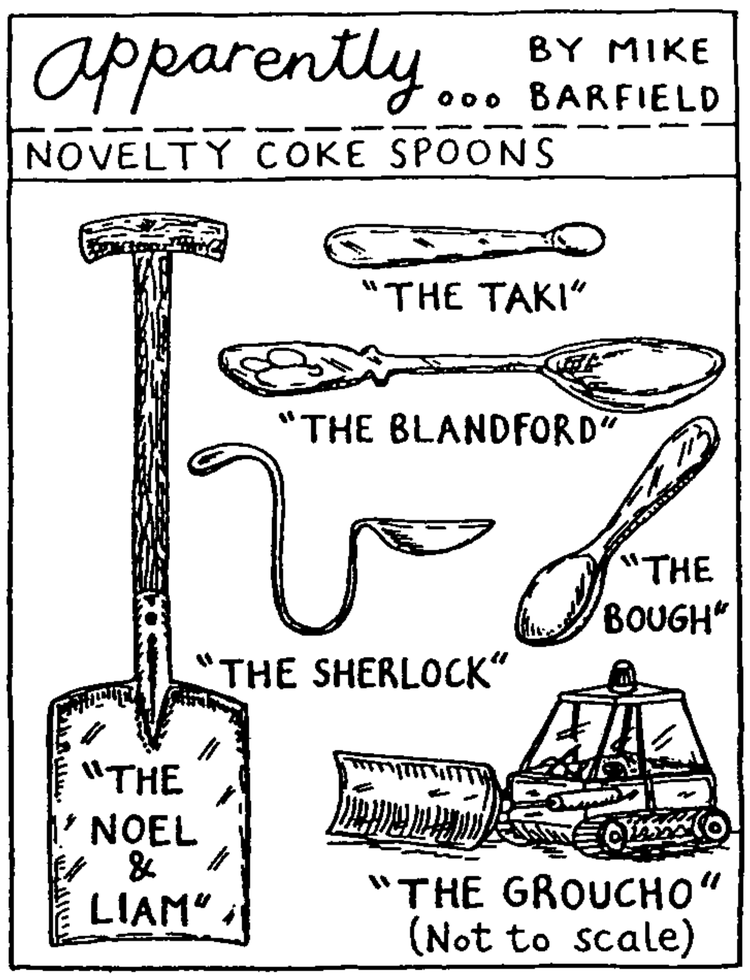
Sir,

I wonder, has anyone else noticed the remarkable resemblance between that loveable, lucky, rescued donkey, "DONK", and Chancellor Gerhard Schroder's latest spouse, Doris Kopf.

Do they both have something to smile about?

Yours sincerely,
J.P. HANAWAY,

Kew, Surrey.



Conspiracy theories

Sir,

Our heartfelt thanks for the continuing publicity. Thanks to you, we are daily becoming less obscure.

We wish to restate that TRIAL BY CONSPIRACY *will not be published by Aspire Publishing. Also for the record, GreeNZone Ltd is an overseas company. It is not owned by, nor does it own Aspire, which is itself owned by Xcentrex Ltd. None of the directors of GreeNZone Ltd serves on the board of Xcentrex Ltd, or vice-versa.*

You claim to hold a synopsis of TRIAL BY CONSPIRACY *on which is stated "Published by Aspire Publishing". This document was obtained from us by subterfuge and false promises by your Mr Uriah Wheep, but leaving that aside, it was an internal document and not for public consumption. The word "published" should have read "distributed". Since we forgive you your "Jonathan Bowern Hunt" faux pas and will not seek to make capital out of it, we ask from you the same courtesy. We ask, but do not expect.*

Now, on to your remarks about the author. You are entitled to your opinion. Other opinions are expressed in your article and shortly will be publicly refuted by the person to whom they are attributed. Jonathan Hunt's chequered background has not been denied, and indeed is referred to in large type on the jacket of his book. Neither he nor we are ashamed of it. Perhaps it would be more to your liking if he were a pervert, or an habitual drunk, or a druggie, or a paedophile, or a wife-beater, as have been many revered and bestselling authors in the past. As for your version of his time working for GRANADA TONIGHT, *it is so grossly inaccurate as to be laughable. Suffice it to say that, despite his lack of training, he was shortlisted for Granada's best news reporter award in 1997.*

The staff here have long been great admirers and avid readers of PRIVATE EYE. *You have often taken an unfashionable stance and ultimately been proved right. More power to your pen. It is all the more regrettable therefore that in the matter of Neil Hamilton, your editor's bias against him (we suppose), blinds you to the possibility that a miscarriage of justice might have occurred. Why not reserve judgement until the book is published in just over two weeks' time, read it, and* **then** *comment? Are you not prepared to give someone a fair hearing, merely on account of your editor's personal antipathy towards him? Such pettiness is not becoming of an iconoclastic publication such as yours.*

Yours faithfully,
EBENEZER UBOLINO WITHERSPOON,

Director, Aspire Publishing, Not a Director, GreeNZone Publishing.

Cotton picking

Sir,

Your literary review column of 1 October was inaccurate.

Jonathan Hunt was never sacked by Granada Television. He and his partner — joint owners of Cotton City Productions — were commissioned to provide a series of consumer investigations over a period of two years for the regional news magazine programme Granada Tonight. They did so successfully until Cotton City Productions ceased to trade as an independent company.

I am not the Programme Editor of Granada Tonight. I have never been asked by PRIVATE EYE *— or any publication — to express an opinion of Mr Hunt or his work.*

Yours sincerely,
SUSAN WOODWARD,

Director of Broadcasting, Granada Television.

● *Susan Woodward's memory has let her down. Earlier this year she gave two long telephone interviews to a* GUARDIAN *reporter during which she happily dished the dirt on Jonathan Hunt — whom she described as "a fucking nutter". Ed.*

Photo opportunity

Sir,

I was shocked to read in my September edition of COMPANY *magazine of the rise and fall of "Asian Babe" Anoja Dias, who claimed to be the daughter of the Sri Lankan ambassador to the UN in order to mix with the cream of polite society. I thought perhaps you might like to reproduce the accompanying photo of the hapless Anoja "Hobnobbing with movers and shakers" as a warning to any of your readers who might be tempted to fall in with such bad company.*

Yours,
ENA B. McQUEEN.

Recycling news

Sir,

The cartoon on page 9 of your latest issue ("Kids these days... they don't know they're born") is amusing but not quite so funny as when it first appeared in issue 921.

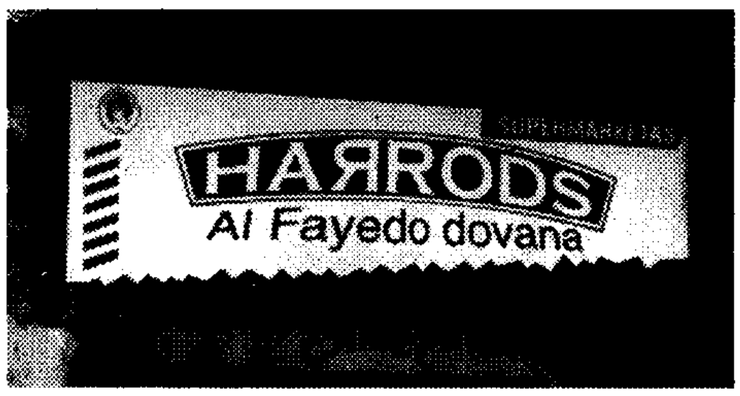
The cutting from Harraps Dictionary on page 22 of issue 956 (definition of Blair) bears a close resemblance to one from Collins in issue 914. Other examples, not involving Andrew Neil, available on request.

Is this part of an editorial policy to reduce global warming by the recycling of old jokes, or are your staff suffering from loss of memory after consuming illegal substances?

JAMES DENNIS,

Via e-mail.

I-SPY *Vilnius, Lithuania*



Submitted by Sanjir Sachder. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Cross words

Sir,

Before coming to the point, may I thank you for opening the eyes of a seventy-two year old woman to the finer modern uses of our glorious language. However, the bottom line is that last issue's crossword is literally as well as morally flawed.

Sincerely,
ELIZABETH MOTT,

Via e-mail.

● *Sorry: new technology baffles pissed old hack, again. Ed.*

Sad farewell

Sir,

Contrary to your story about Leonard Doyle, his departure from the OBSERVER *was certainly not the cause of jubilation here. Leonard is a respected friend and highly regarded journalist and innuendo about his lack of impartiality does him a grave injustice. He will be missed by all of us in the newsroom.*

Yours,
ROBIN McKIE, SANDRA JORDON, DAVID CONNET, JONATHAN CALVERT, R. BROOKS, PETER BEAUMONT, EUAN FERGUSON, MARTIN BRIGHT, NEAL ASCHERSON, ARNOLD KEMP, JOHN SWEENEY,

The Observer.

What Butler saw

Sir,

Your powers of innovative journalism reach new heights (HP Sauce, EYE *960). I read, on 30 September, detailed descriptions of events that very day at the Labour party conference. Not satisfied with this coup, you proceed to give a run down of proceedings on 1 October.*

Do you have plans to give details of winning lottery numbers in advance?

Yours faithfully,
BARRY BUTLER,

Birmingham.

Chew on this

Sir,

On the evening of Friday 25 September, a group of friends and myself were in Richmond, Yorkshire, desperate for a few drinks and curry. Just off the market square we saw the Tandoori Nights (unusual name!!). It was about 10.50pm at this time and were amazed to find it nearly empty. We realised why when we found that the restaurant did not have a licence for alcohol. While one of our party went to the nearest pub to collect an armful of bottles, the waiter tried to convince us of the benefits of a Tandoori restaurant without a licence. "Most of our clients are alcoholic and they like to come here because they can then concentrate on enjoying their meal."

The following evening, outside the restaurant, a certain Mr and Mrs Hague were seen cutting ribbons and posing for local press, accompanied by the same waiter.

Is this a couple who like to "concentrate on their meal"?

Yours in digestion,
BRIAN PURKISS,

Cambridge.

Bad trip?

Sir,

Maybe it is just me as one of the youth of today, but do any of your other readers agree that the set for the Conservative party conference bears a striking resemblance to the sights (and sounds?) of a drug induced trip? No wonder Ann Widdecombe was so animated.

Yours in peace, man,
CATRIN LLEWELLYN,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The band never actually split up — we just stopped speaking to each other and went our own separate ways."
BOY GEORGE, Radio 2
(Quintin Gill)

"Damien Hirst tends to use everyday objects such as a shark in formaldehyde."
FASHION COMMENTATOR, Radio 4
(Robert Grindrod)

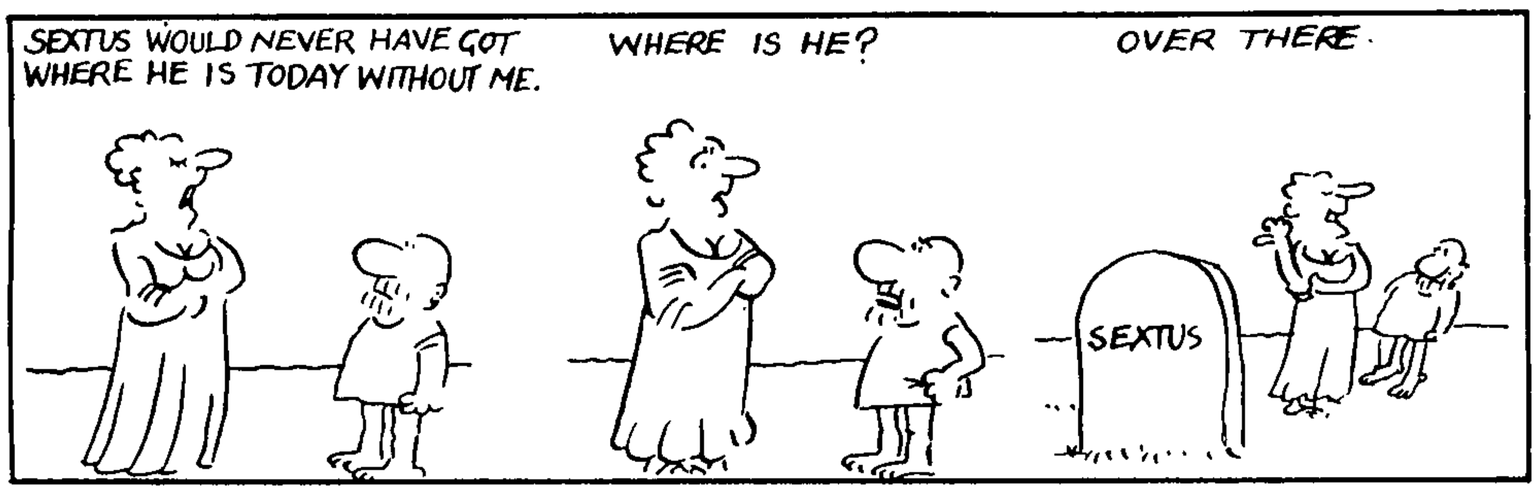
"That was Joseph Weston, eponymous owner of The Cork Street Gallery..."
Radio 5
(George Edwards)

"Once you do go a goal down to a side like Man United the shoulders and the confidence do tend to disappear."
TREVOR BROOKING, Radio 5 Live
(David Evans)

Sky TV Presenter: *That was a good performance from your dog, and he recorded a good time as well.*
Greyhound Owner: *Why, what was it?*
Sky TV Presenter: *I dunno.*
(Ian Sargeant)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



Letter from **Australia**

from Our Own Correspondent

ON THE sports field everyone knows we Australians win everything. But when it comes to politics, we're also-rans.

We're still not sure if there were any winners in our elections. "Honest" John Howard's conservative Coalition got reelected with only 48 percent of the vote while the Labor party's "Cuddly" Kim Beasley is in opposition on 51 percent. If anyone's celebrating it'll be with a jar of Clayton's — the non-alcoholic wine teetotallers call "the drink you have when you're not having a drink".

Honest John promised "race" wouldn't be an issue — but we had a Clayton's race election. The party all the others claim is racist, One Nation, came nowhere. Or so it seemed. It was founded last year by Pauline Hanson, the ginger whinger from Ipswich Queensland dropped by the Liberals before the 1996 election because she made unpleasant remarks about Asians and blacks.

Only a month ago she was talking about being the "mother of Australia", winning 12 seats in the house of representatives, four or five in the senate, breaking the mould, etc. She lost her own place and her party gained only one seat in the senate.

For losers, though, One Nation did all right: more than three quarters of a million votes in the house of representatives — a terrifying challenge to the National party, the usual repository of rural spleen and "junior" partners in the Coalition. One Nation thereby qualifies for election expenses worth about a million quid. And thanks to our uniquely stupid "preferential voting" system enough One Nation votes ended up in Honest John's back pocket. Which is how he "won".

When we vote — we're fined fifty bucks if we don't — we have to select from a list of candidates in order of preference. Ticks or crosses against one name only aren't counted. We have to number *all* the boxes, including every monster raving loony from left or right, every religious maniac and even smartarses with names like I.M. Grim Reaper. Very tedious.

If the candidate with most votes hasn't got 50 percent plus one the second choices of all the others are distributed until the one who gets most gets in. This is why everyone was worried about One Nation. They could have got up a lot of candidates if they'd scored enough second choice votes.

Hair-raising opinion polls on election day showed as much as 15 percent for One Nation and more in Queensland and New South Wales. So, Libs and Nats had to attract their preferences without actually reciprocating. They could start banging on about boongs and slopes. Which is what they did in a Clayton's sort of way.

National party leader and deputy prime minister Tim "The Hat" Fischer led the way. For three weeks he'd been sighted in every godforsaken rural slum spewing out verbal gladdies about "feeling your pain" from the rear end of his own campaign train. Three days to go he gathered his Drizabone collar around his wide brown ears, planted the Akubra firmly on his bald spot, pulled on his elastic-sided Blunstone boots, and got down and dirty.

In the One Nation heartland he made a surprisingly nasty speech attacking aboriginal land councils. They were, he screeched, "blood sucking leeches". This was much meaner than anything Pauline said the year she was dumped by the Liberals, but was it really racist? Nah. He was only attacking bloody black bureaucrats after all, and to be branded a racist in Australia these days you have to dress up in white sheets and burn people on fiery crosses. Anything less is free speech.

When asked to comment Honest John had no problem. Fischer's race "credentials" were, he said, "impeccable". Freed from Paul "The Lizard" Keating's multi-cultural political correctness we can say what we like now, it seems, except call anyone a racist.

Tim's heavy hints and John's endorsement must have convinced enough One Nation voters to plump for the Coalition as their second choice. That's not to say Labor didn't get any One Nation preferences. In a few seats they won enough to claw back some of their 1996 embarrassments.

So we're all losers — which is how we like it.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"I can fully understand why the Maoris want Greytown's original name to be restored," Chairman Jim Rimene told a meeting of Wairapa council in Christchurch, "but I worry that some people might be offended if they get their way. You see, the traditional Maori name for this town is 'Te Hupenui,' and that translates into English as 'The Big Snot'."

Voicing his concerns, the chairman explained: " 'Hupe' is the fluid that runs from the nose when people cry. It has deep spiritual significance for Maoris, but it is often misunderstood by other people, who just think it's disgusting. When someone dies, the tears and the hupe are allowed to fall on the ground as a mark of respect. The more mucus that drips onto the ground, the more the dead person is honoured. Maoris do this all over the country. It is their way of showing sorrow for the dead. I respect their ceremonies, but I'm afraid there's still no getting away from the facts: most people just don't want to live in a town called 'The Big Snot'."

The council eventually agreed that the name 'Te Hupenui' could appear on town signs beneath the word 'Greytown', but without being translated into English. *(The Dominion [Wellington], 4/9/98. Spotter: Alan Ball)*

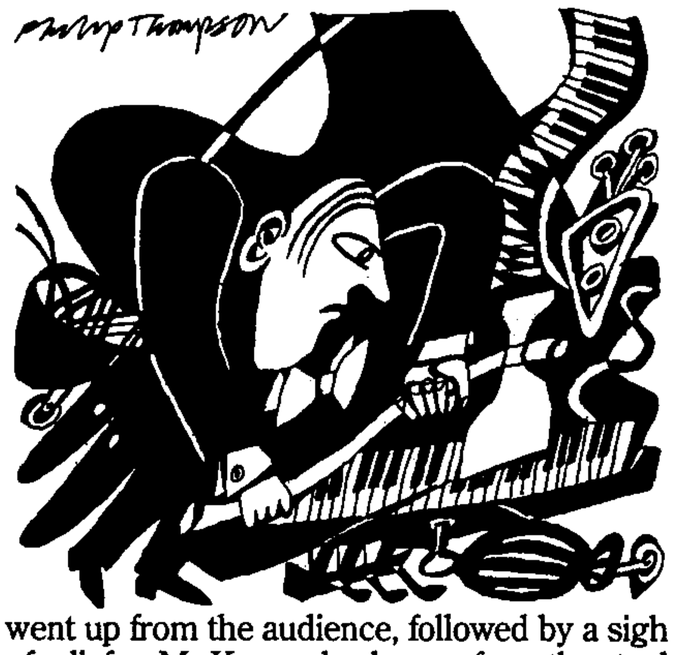
—●—

"The recital last evening in the chamber music room of the Erewan Hotel by US pianist Myron Kropp can only be described by this reviewer as one of the most interesting experiences he has witnessed in a long time. With sparse, sandy hair, a sallow complexion, and a deceptively frail looking frame, the man who has repopularised Johann Sebastian Bach approached the Baldwin Concert Grand, bowed to the audience, and placed himself upon the stool.

As I have mentioned before, the Baldwin Concert Grand, while basically a fine instrument, needs constant attention, particularly in a climate such as Bangkok. In this humidity, the felts which separate the white keys from the black tend to swell, causing an occasional key to stick, which apparently was the case last night with the D in the second octave. During the 'raging storm' section of the D Minor Toccata and Fugue, Mr Kropp must be complimented for putting up with the awkward D.

"However, some who attended the performance later questioned whether the awkward key justified some of the language which was heard coming from the stage during the softer passages of the fugue. During one passage, Mr Kropp turned around completely so that, whereas before his remarks had been aimed largely at the piano and were therefore somewhat muted, to his surprise and that of those in the chamber music room, he found himself addressing himself directly to the audience. But such things do happen, and the person who began to laugh deserves to be severely reprimanded for this undignified behaviour.

"Unfortunately, laughter is contagious, and by the time it had subsided and the audience had regained its composure Mr Kropp appeared to be somewhat shaken. Nevertheless he swivelled himself back into position facing the piano and, leaving the fugue unfinished, commenced on the Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor. Why the concert grand piano's G key in the third octave chose that particular time to begin sticking I hesitate to guess. However, it is certainly safe to say that Mr Kropp did nothing to help matters when he began using his feet to kick the lower portion of the piano instead of operating the pedals as is generally done. Possibly it was this jarring that caused the right front leg of the piano to buckle slightly inward, leaving the entire instrument listing at a 35-degree angle from that which is normal. A gasp

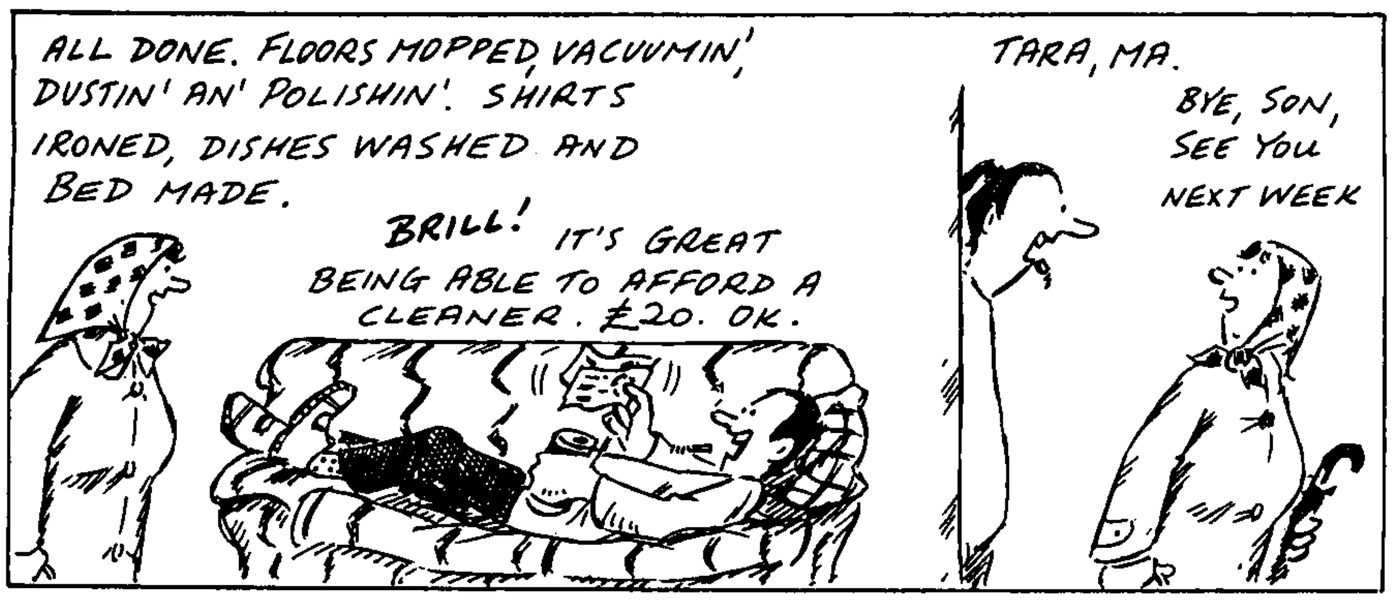


went up from the audience, followed by a sigh of relief as Mr Kropp slowly rose from the stool and left the stage. A few men in the back of the room began clapping, and when Mr Kropp reappeared a few moments later it seemed he was responding to the ovation. Apparently, however, he had left to get the red-handled fire axe which was hung back stage, and began chopping at the legs of the piano.

"When the weakened legs finally collapsed altogether and Mr Kropp continued to chop, it became obvious to all that he had no intention of going on with the concert. The ushers came rushing in and, with the help of the hotel manager, two Indian watchmen, and a passing police corporal, finally succeeded in disarming Mr Kropp and dragging him off the stage." *(The Bangkok Post, 27/8/98. Spotter: E. Reeve)*

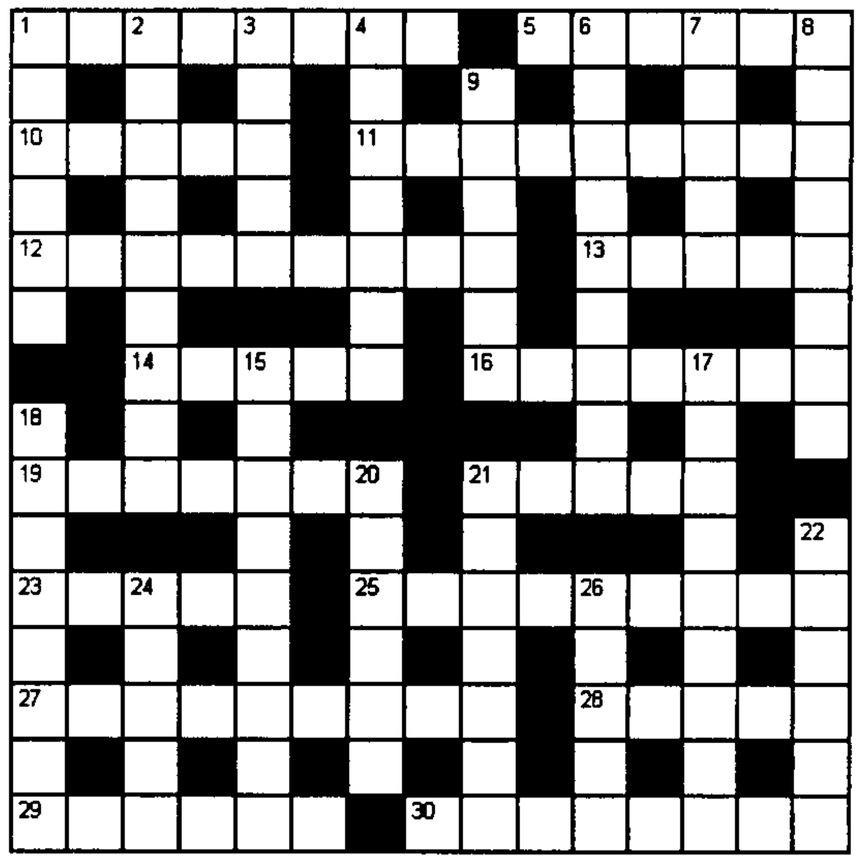
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


ALL DONE. FLOORS MOPPED, VACUUMIN', DUSTIN' AN' POLISHIN'. SHIRTS IRONED, DISHES WASHED AND BED MADE.
BRILL! IT'S GREAT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD A CLEANER. £20. OK.
TARA, MA.
BYE, SON, SEE YOU NEXT WEEK

EYE CROSSWORD 116

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/18 It certainly needs to be raised when Brenda's at home! (3,5,8)
5 Top grade US woman walking the streets (6)
10 Smooth hacks (5)
11 Pisspoor help Tony added to direction of film (9)
12 Hillary presumably not Clinton's – certainly not his last! (5,4)
13 Americans – jerks! (5)
14 Stuff pop star Michael, he's dropped an 'E' (5)
16 Southern pro's no frigging angel (7)
19 It's flipping Brown in charge – what a disaster! (7)
21 Obscure character pocketing a lot of money, this official? (5)
23 Corner youth for sex (5)
25 Sportingly, etc. join in shot (9)
27 Defender of belief – neither Clinton nor Japanese PM much of one? (9)
28 Ring back sinful woman (5)
29 Pudding Brenda's comparatively useless (6)
30 Brazil cover testicles nightmare (8)

DOWN

1 Italian car with very loud warning (3-3)
2 Magazine's justified to show head-turning ejaculation from the sergeant (4,5)
3 The right place to make a film's beginning (5)
4 A piss is, you might say, to satisfy a demand (7)
6/20 Lush retreat of the wealthy in USA? (5,4,6)
7 Some lines – no flipping pictures! (5)
8 (see 26)
9 They should cover Dolly's bust (6)
15 It's not being slurred, we hear, that causes such a discharging organ (5,4)
17 Get rid of germs to perform a vasectomy? (9)
18 (see 1 ac.)
20 (see 6)
21 Jack, as all may see, just about holds one as a form of self-defence (2-5)
22 Divulge international body's cover-up (6)
24 Poor Ffion – love interest lacking, spasmodic (2-3)
26/8 Those inclined to get in the wrong gear? (5-8)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 23.10.98.
Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye,
6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 115

Winner: KEVIN MORRELL

ACROSS: 1 Bucks 4 Backbiter 9 On the blower 10 Ram 11 Doorknob 12 Libido 14 Offal 16 Kray Twins 18 Refusenik 20 Robin 22/23 Greedy bastards 23 (see 22 ac.) 26 ESP 27 Trend-setter 28 Kitchener 29 Staff.

DOWN: 1 Broadmoor 2 Cuts off 3 Speak 4 Bollocking 5 Cows 6 Barrister 7 Tartini 8 Romeo 13 Backhander 15 Last-ditch 17 Sans serif 19 Flea-pit 21 Biretta 22 Greek 24 Trews 25 Benn.

FANS SHOCKED AS BOOZZA ENTERS CLINIC

by Our Drinking Correspondent
AL COHOLIC

THERE were heartbreak scenes yesterday when the internationally acclaimed drinker Paul "Boozza" Boozboyne was admitted to a £100-a-night drying out clinic in his native North East.

Said one supporter, "Boozza is throwing his drinking life away. His place is out there with the lads in the centre of the pub. He is squandering his drinking talents in this reckless health drive."

Lager Than Life

But his drinking manager assured fans that Boozza would soon be back.

"He is still capable of sinking 18 pints a night," he said. "We hope he will soon recover from this temporary lapse."

Paul Boozza is 31 pints.

NEW CHRISTMAS CRAZE SWEEPS BRITAIN

by Phil Stocking

THIS is the toy that parents won't be buying this Christmas in their thousands.

Imported from the US, the FURGY is a cuddly red-headed doll that talks non-stop when financially squeezed.

Better Dead Than Redhead

This toy sensation of the season is primed with a vocabulary of up to three words — "Super", "Great" and "Wow".

But parent pressure groups are already worried that the FURGY could stunt the intellectual development of their children.

However, a spokesman for the manufacturers said, "If anyone is stupid enough to buy one of these, it won't make any difference."

The first time MCC members rejected women was in a vote on the application for membership in 1991 by Rachael Heyhoe Flint, the former England women's captain.

"I think it's wonderful," she said outside Lord's last night as MCC members walked past in various states of excitement.

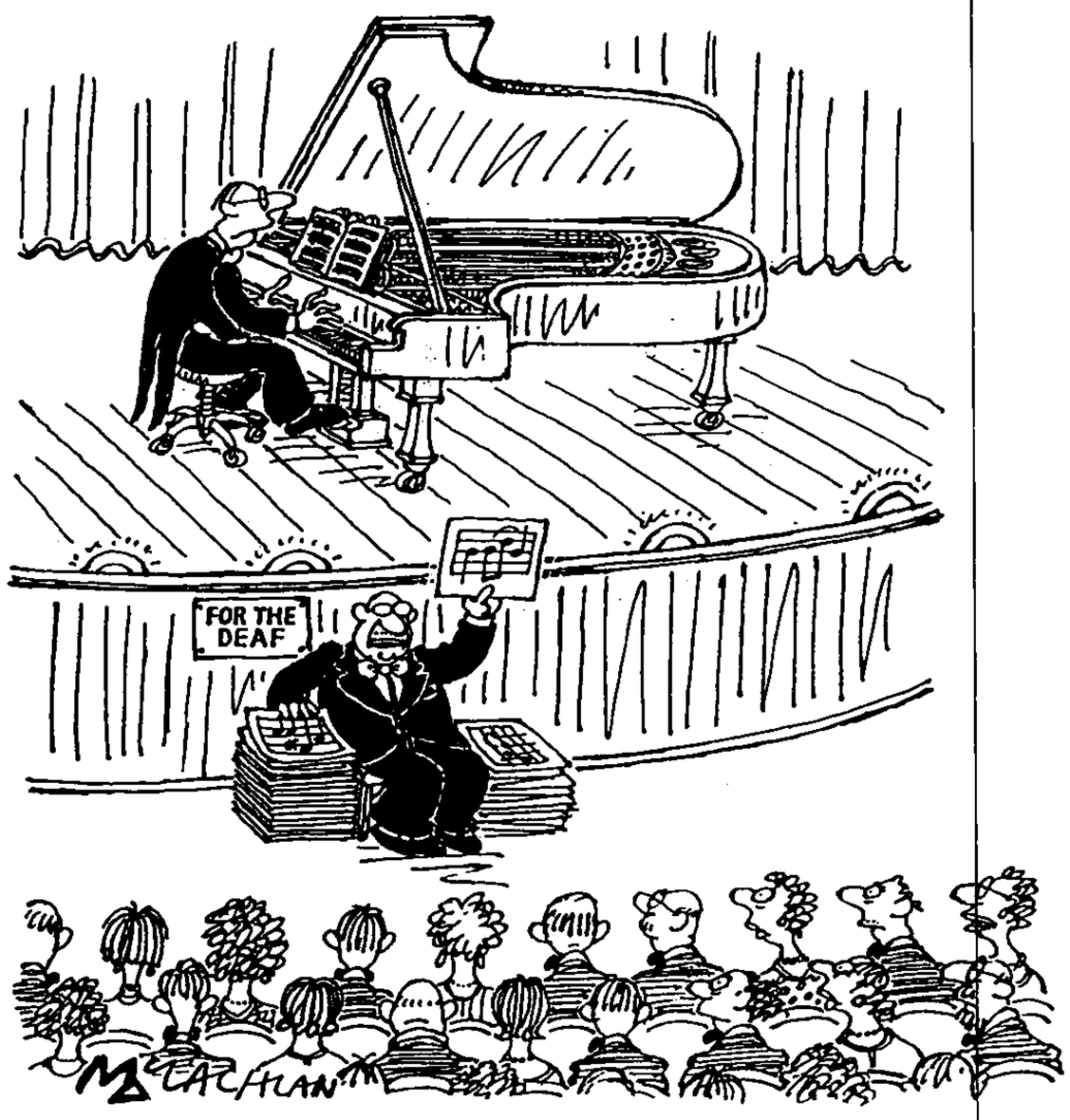
Daily Telegraph

● In the July issue we incorrectly styled Lady Sarah Berry and Lord Donoughue's Jack Russell, Honey. Her full title is Her Royal Wickedness, The Princess Honey. We apologise for any offence given.

The Field

On Monday a six-month undercover infiltration scheme came to a climax with the arrest of 134 people, 11 men and two women.

Independent



GLENDA SLAGG

Fleet Street's One-Woman Strike Force

GLOBAL Meltdown??? Don't make me larf, mister!! Like where, I'd like to know??!?!

Walk down any High Street and waddyasee??? Gals 'n' guys a-spendin' and a-spreein' like there's no tomorrow!?!?

Give us a break Mr Doom 'n' Gloom!!?!

Like the wise guy said, we've never had it so good!!?!!

WHO DO they think we are — a bunch of schoolkids who don't know their TOOTSIE from their FOOTSIE??!?!!

Walk down any High Street and waddyasee??? Beggars a-beggin', shops a-closin' and not a guy or gal in sight!!!

Meltdown!?! You bet, mister!!!

I'd put money on it — if I had any!!? (Geddit???)

HATS off to the old buffers of the MCC!!! At long last they've seen sense and let us gals into the Long Room (and not just to make the tea!?!).

Now, how about changing the name — from LORD'S to LADY'S!!! (Geddit??!?!)

THE MCC — have they gone stark staring bonkers!!!!?

For years they stood out against letting in the dames!!! But now these gutless geezers have given in!?!

Whatever next?!?! Don't laugh, mister, but I predict they'll be changing the name — from

LORD'S to LADY'S!!! (Geddit??)

HOWZAT for a bunch of BATTY blokes in blazers??!?!

HERE they are — Glenda's Halloween Rumpy Pumpkins

● **JUDGE GEE!!!** IF you're feeling suicidal, M'Lud, why not jump off something onto me!?!?

● **BERNARD HAITINK!!** Covent Garden's ex-number one conductor!!? Now you've got nothing to do why don'tcha come on round and wave your baton at ME!

● **SUMAR CHAKRABARTI** — first non-white senior member of the Cabinet Office. Crazy name — crazy guy!!!

Byeeeeee!!!!

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Well, I'm back again after another very important mission, carrying the message of the "Third Way" to our brethren in distant China!

And it is distant, believe me! Seventeen hours in an aeroplane gave Cherie and me plenty of time to think about the great and ancient civilisation we were about to visit, and what we could do to improve their lot!

And there are a lot of them, mark my words!

200 billion of them, if I got my figures right!

I know some of you are deeply concerned about China's alleged record on human rights, and the way the authorities are supposed to persecute those who share our beliefs.

Let me say at once that I share your concern, and I was determined to raise the matter with our hosts when a suitable opportunity arose.

But, look, if you're invited to a party, you don't immediately start criticising your hosts' choice of dips, or the quality of the drinks they are serving!

One thing I've learned, travelling around the world, is that different people have different ways of doing things. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Whoever said that certainly had a good point!

Anyway, Cherie and I really enjoyed ourselves! We were lucky enough to visit the Great Wall, which is a truly remarkable sight. How many of us, I couldn't help wondering, have a "great wall" in our own lives, dividing us from our fellows. I thought it might make a good chorus for our next family service!

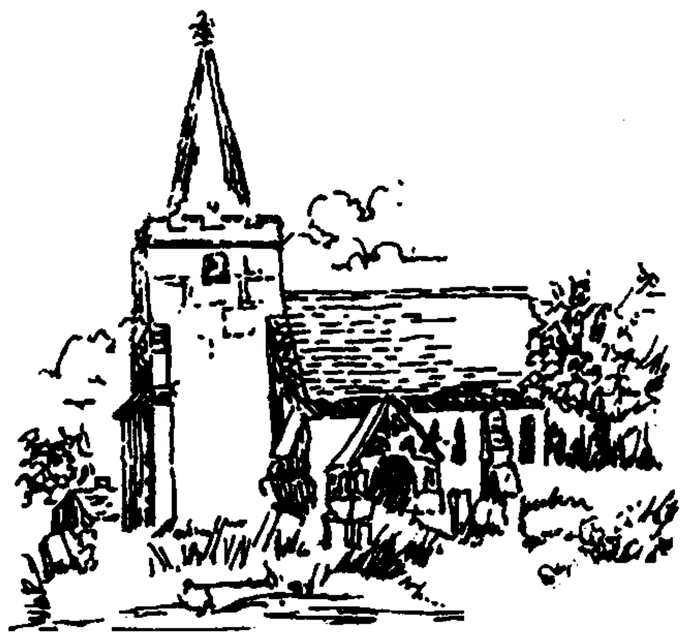
"There is a Great Wall far away
That all of us must climb.
A great Wall far away
A wall as old as time.

Chorus
Climb, climb, climb the wall
Climb it every day.
Climb, climb, climb the wall
At work and rest and play!"

Words and Music © A.R.P. Blair 1998

But I'm sorry to have to say that when Cherie and I touched base back at the Vicarage, we found a pretty negative atmosphere in the parish.

A lot of you have got it into your



heads that the parish finances are not in quite such good shape as Mr Brown has been telling us all.

There are doubts as to whether we will be able to afford some of the projects we have budgeted for, like spending more money on the primary school and the cottage hospital.

Well, all I can say is that, if Mr Brown has got his sums wrong, then it's no fault of mine!

I can't be everywhere at once in the parish, but I can assure you that I will be keeping a very close check on our treasurer in the coming weeks and if changes have to be made, I will not hesitate to think very carefully about making them!

So let us remember that when I took over the parish a year ago, things were in a pretty bad way, and it's bound to take a little time to sort it all out!

Don't forget the words of Our Lord, "You have nothing to fear but fear itself" *(New Deal Bible)*.

Yours,

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mrs Short, who in a moment of thoughtlessness and lack of compassion made an unprovoked attack on the Vicar's dear and close friend Rev William Jefferson Clintstone III of the Church of Seven Day Fornicators. Clare has since written to Tony apologising. Let us all remember the words of the Good Book, "People who live in glass houses shouldn't cast the first stone" *(Proverbs)*. After all, Clare wouldn't like us to raise issues of her own private life (eg, her love child), would she? T.B.

From The Churchwarden

It has been brought to my attention that people are complaining about an alleged misuse of parish raffle funds. Just because we made it clear that this money would only go to local charities, they are now complaining that we are using it to pay off general parish expenses. I would like to make it clear that there is nothing wrong with this, and if the Vicar and I decide to spend the money in this way, then that's our affair and no one else's.

So in future I would be grateful if parishioners would mind their own business.

P Mandelson, Churchwarden

Greetings From Peking

SWEET AND SOUR
Guess who's the sweet one?

You Write.....

From Mr T. Banks

Dear Sir,

Call me old-fashioned if you like, but I never thought I would live to see the day when, on our parish outing, I was expected to wear a name tag sponsored by a local supermarket. Whose crazy idea was

Yours sincerely
Tony Banks Chair,
St Albion's Playing Field Committee

■ The editor Mr Campbell reserves the right to cut any letters for reasons of space.

PARISH OUTING TO BLACKPOOL DIARY

by Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club

We arrived seven hours late, no thanks to Mr So-Called Branson and his trains. In future, I for one will be travelling by car, thank you very much! Still, spirits were high as we all caught our first glimpse of the famous "tower".

We were all looking forward to a bit of a knees-up and a few pints. But, no offence to the Vicar, when he got up and gave his little talk that was meant to cheer us all up, it frankly all fell a bit flat. Fortunately, yours truly was on hand to save the day with a few jokes (some of them at Tony's expense!) and everyone went home feeling they had had quite a good time after all.

J.P.

COOK AND BLAIR THREATEN SERBS

by Our Foreign Staff **Phil Space**

THIS TIME we really mean it!

That was the no-holds-barred ultimatum from the British Government yesterday to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

Said Foreign Secretary Robin Cook: "In the past we may have appeared to be only making idle threats but not now.

"This time we really mean business, and President Milosevic would be very foolish not to recognise that we mean what we say."

His ultimatum was echoed by Prime Minister Tony Blair.

In an uncompromising, straight-from-the-shoulder message to the notorious war criminal, Mr Blair said "the time for words is passed. Let me say this. This is my final warning.

"I am not going to say it again. This time we really mean business. Business is what we mean."

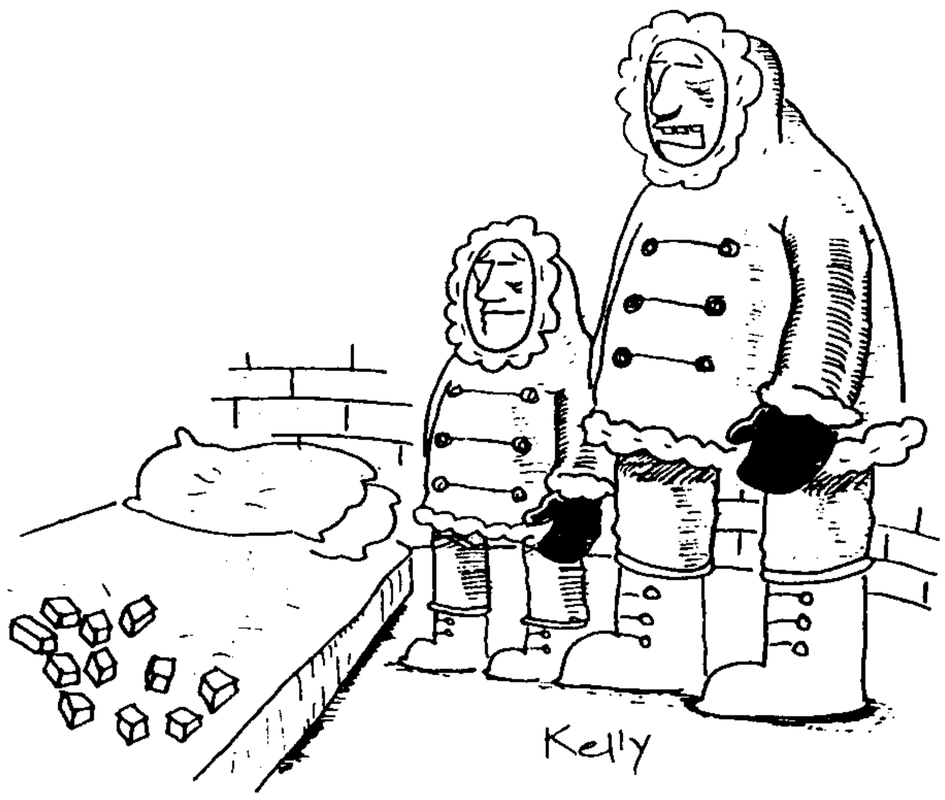
Mr Blair added: "I would like to make it clear that the time for talking has come to an end.

"I hope Mr Milosevic will listen very carefully to the warning the British Government is issuing to him.

"Our patience is not inexhaustible. I am going to count to ten and if *(cont. p. 94)*.

ON OTHER PAGES

Serb massacres continue p8



"You've wet your bed again, haven't you?"

We are located in the historic centre of town just a few steps from the central train station and the San Lorenzo market. We are happy to welcome you to our hotel where a young man and warm atmosphere makes you feel confortable.

Hotel Globus, Florence

Ideally you will be of graduate calibre with at least two years' experience in Pubic Relations. *Telegraph Group Advertisement (Grauniad)*

A Doctor writes...

AS A Doctor, I am often asked by Inspector Knacker, "Doctor, I must ask you to accompany me to the station, as I have reason to believe that you have murdered several hundred of your patients."

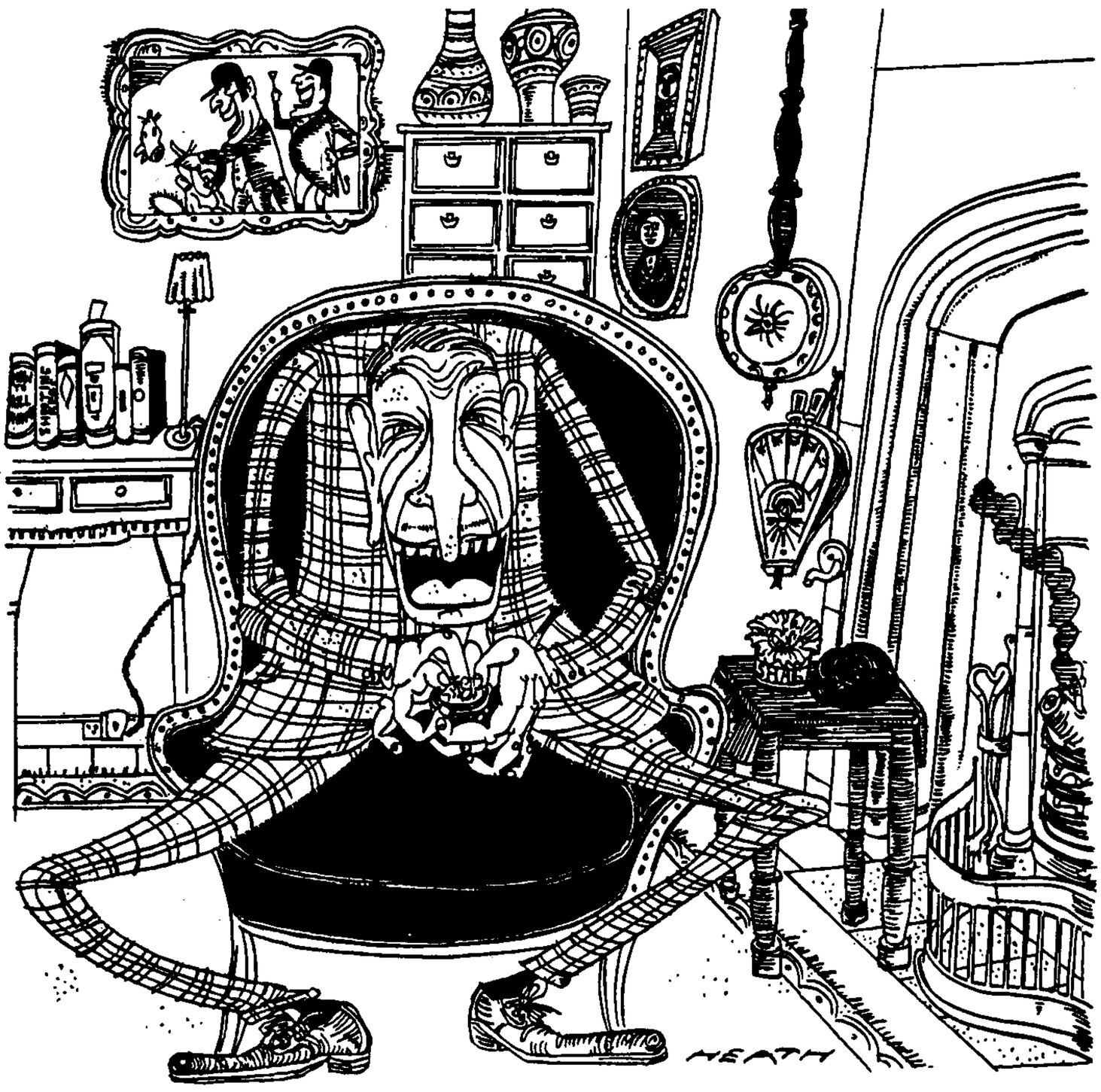
If you are a doctor who is worried about being arrested,

you should consult your family solicitors. Or better still flee the country.

© *A. Doctor 1998*

Harry Enfield's **Bores**. Drawn by Michael Heath

"I'm thinking of writing a book about my wonderfully colourful ancestry I am the eighth generation of the Cumberland-Sausage family to farm in this particular part of East Anglia & I have to say that my family genealogy is extremely fascinating it really is my grandfather Charles Cumberland-Sausage was a very popular man & master of the hunt who wrote a most marvellous diary full of hilarious anecdotes of galloping over the meadows whilst slightly tipsy ha ha ha & his grandfather also named Charles Cumberland-Sausage was a real character he used to expose himself to the young chambermaids & is reputed to have taken at least thirty of their virginities of course these days he'd probably be had up for sexual harassment but thankfully he lived in purer times before all this political correctness ha ha ha & his father George Cumberland-Sausage married Lavinia Horse-Face reputedly a great beauty & she was also the daughter of Major General Sir Horace Horse-Face and equerry to the Prince of Wales so there's a Royal connection there he was also a keen fisherman which is fascinating in fact my family goes all the way back to the Domesday Book Rupert de Saucisson is mentioned..."



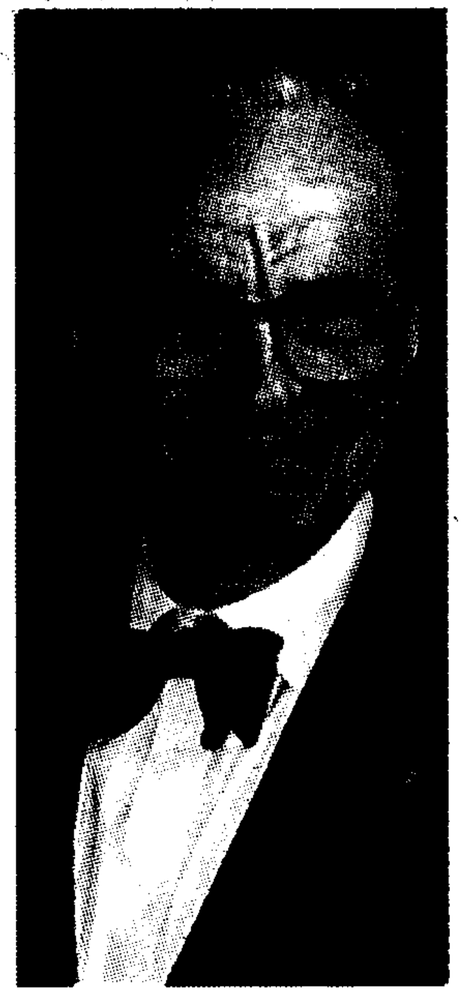
What You Will Not See In

THE Sun

Friday, October 16, 1998

VIAGRA MAN BONKS 200 TIMES A NIGHT AND WINS DIGITAL DECODER

RAUNCHY RUPE'S TASTY CHINESE TAKEAWAY!



By Sun Staff CHRIS MUCK and TREVOR FILTH

THE DIRTY Digger's at it again!

Only a few weeks after multi-media magnate Rupe Murdoch walked out on his bride of 27 years, he has helped himself to a right little Prawn Cracker from Peking!

She is curvaceous, busty Wendy Deng, a pint-sized sex kitten from the Orient.

When the saucy siren from Shanghai caught the Dirty Digger's eye at a glitzy Manhattan book-launch, it was a case of lust at first sight!

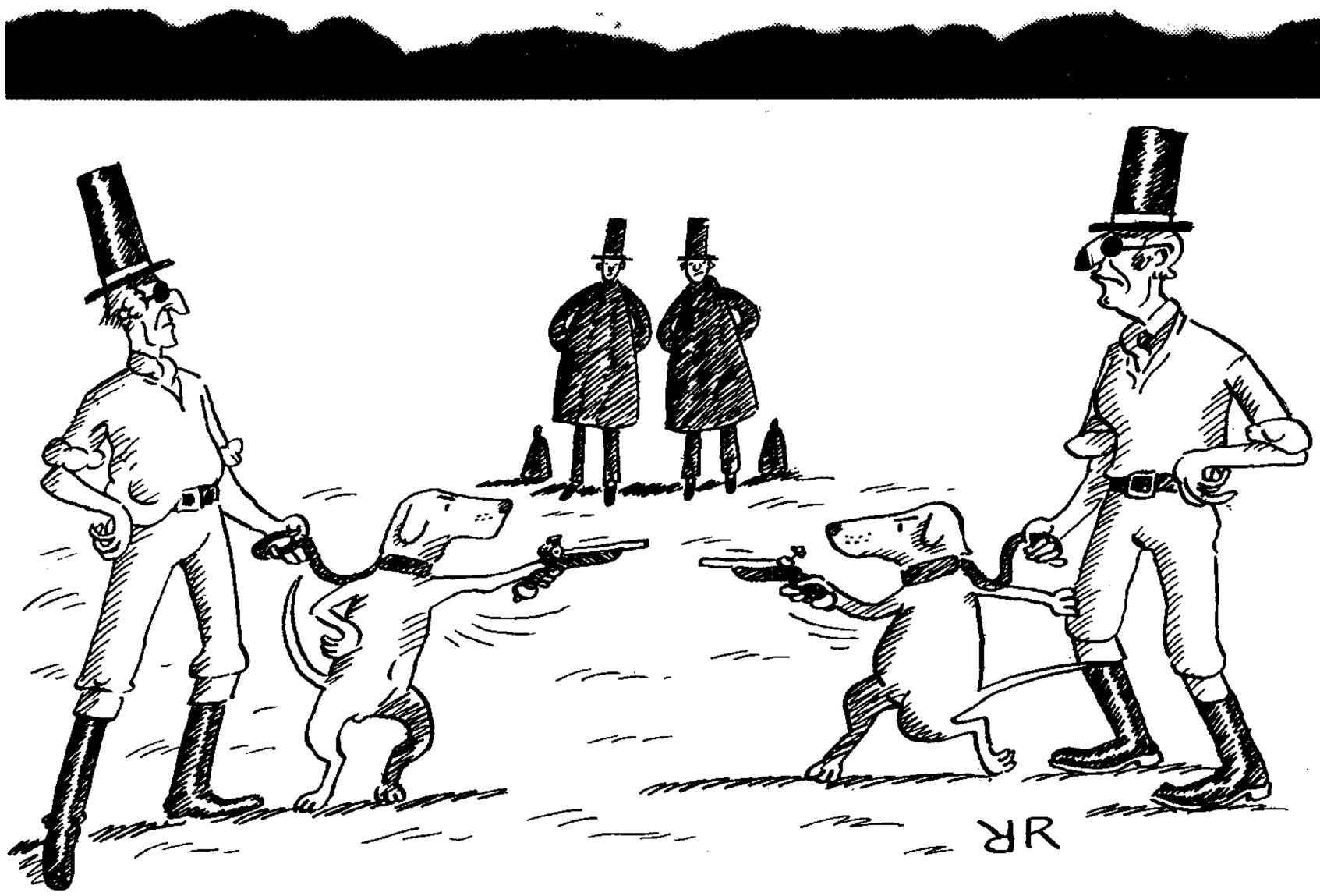
Porn Cracker

Neigbours in their exclusive Upper East Side apartment block said last night "they are at it night and day".

But while Abo Rupe is busy showing off his legendary didgeridoo to the Suzie Wong who can't get enough, 3000 miles away in California his estranged wife Liz is plotting her revenge.

Last night she told the Sun: "I'm going to sue that bastard for every penny he's got."

A case of chop suey, wouldn't you say Rupe?



MODERN ETIQUETTE #12 'GREETINGS'
MY GOD! HOW ARE YOU? FANTASTIC!
1. BEST FRIENDS
MY GOD! HOW ARE YOU? FANTASTIC!
2. CLOSE FRIENDS
MY GOD! HOW ARE YOU? FANTASTIC!
3. ACQUAINTANCES

Those Australian election results in full

(contd from page 1)

WOGGA-WOGGA (South).
No Change.
Fred Swagman (National Liberal Keep Our Queen Party) 4,312; F V Billabong (Labour Republican Down With The Poms) 4,311; Mrs Adelina Hitler (Send The Abos Back Where They Came From) 0.
(That's quite enough Aussie election results. Ed.)

STARTING TODAY IN PRIVATE EYE

- *Queen Mother "liked" Thatcher*
- *Thatcher "couldn't stand" the Queen*
- *The Queen "loved" horses*

THE WYFRONT DIARIES

Marquesa Bettina di Coronatione Strada - a close friend of Lord Wyfront

ALREADY everybody is talking about them as the most sensational literary event of the decade. For over 40 years the late Woodrow Wyfront occupied a key position in British life as head of the Horserace Totalisator Board, rubbing shoulders with all the greatest horses of our age. But only now has it come to light that, throughout that time, Lord Wyfront was keeping a daily diary, chronicling the intrigues, the scandals, the glitter, the glatter and the glotter of his charmed circle. Now read on:

1979 May 21: Lunch at the Garrick with William (Rees-Mogg) and Bernard (Levin). They tell me, on the highest authority, that some new woman has been put in charge at Number 10. Her name apparently is Thatcher. Can't see that lasting.

Lord Balogun (left) makes a point to Sir Oscar Counterclaim at one of Lord Wyfront's lunches

June 1: Had one of my famous "lunches" with Bernard and a glittering array of the rich and powerful. They included the Queen Mother, a dear woman, looking radiant as always. We discussed who was going to win the Derby. How knowledgeable she is about horses.

June 29: Lunch at the Athenaeum with a very important man, whose name I cannot disclose or even remember. I was able to tell him that I had heard on the very highest authority that it was a warm day. Enjoyed a cigar with the brandy.

August 12: A historic day. I have been summoned to lunch at Chequers by Mrs Thatcher. She was very pleased with my reference to her in my News of the World column as "the greatest and most beautiful woman I have ever had the honour to meet". I told her that she should not be afraid to run the country in any way she wants. She said she valued my advice, because I was never afraid to speak my mind.

1983. November 21: Dinner at George Weidenfeld's. The food as usual was uneatable and the conversation tedious beyond belief. Ted Heath was there, looking radiant. He told me that he had once been Prime Minister.

1987. June 12: Gave one of my famous lunches in honour of my very old friend the Queen Mother. "You are looking very radiant, your Majesty," I told her in my blunt outspoken way. Over the Lobster Thermidor she confided in me that her daughter was the Queen of England, and

WHO'S WHO IN THE WORLD OF WOODROW WYFRONT

Mrs Thatcher: Prime Minister of Britain 1979-1990.

Her Majesty the Queen: Queen of England since 1952.

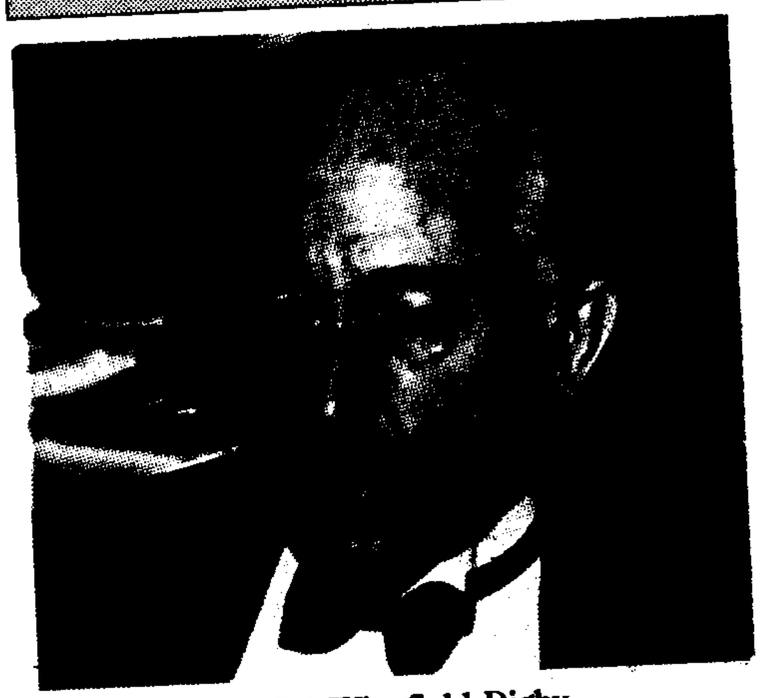
Lord Reelly-Smugg: formerly William Rees-Mogg, one of Wyfront's oldest friends.

"Honest Jock" Balon: one of the most respected bookmakers of his time.

Lady Moussaka Wyfront: Greek-born 14th wife of the celebrated diarist.

Salmonella Wyfront: beautiful, talented daughter of the celebrated diarist, and known in her own right as his daughter.

Sid Wingfield-Digby: manager of local branch of Sketchley's, responsible for cleaning Lord Wyfront's celebrated collection of bow ties.



Sketchley boss Sid Wingfield Digby

what did I advise? I said I would mention it in my column in the News of the World. She was very pleased.

1990. November 22: My very oldest friend Mrs Thatcher couldn't come to lunch because she has been cruelly cast aside by her Party. "This is indeed a black day", as I confided to her on the telephone, when she rang to tell me the news. Took my favourite purple bow tie with the yellow polka dots to the cleaners. They promised to have it back to me in time for Ascot, where I may well have the honour of meeting the Queen.

NEXT WEEK: I have lunch with Lord Weinstock, a man called Major becomes Prime Minister and I get my bow tie back from the cleaners.

HUSBANDS

I'm knackered and we've no money for a taxi
Leave it to me!
CAR
It's a lovely runner.. lots of extras for the price
CAR SALES
SALE
naw sorry, don't like it mate.. just drop us 'ere eh
PEELS

IN THE COURTS

Judge Accused of £1 Million Mortgage Swindle

Regina v. Mr Justice Fraud

Before Mr Justice Cocklecarrot

Sir Hartley Redface Q.C. *(for the accused)*: M'lud, I submit that were this trial to proceed, my client, who is already a very sick man, might well go out of his mind and be tempted to take his own life.

Mr Justice Cocklecarrot *(for it is he)*: This is indeed distressing news. The defendant, who is of course well known to me as a fellow member of the Garrick Club, has indeed been of unsound mind, to my certain knowledge, for many years. Sir Hartley, have you any evidence to support your plea, true though it undoubtedly is?

Sir Hartley: I would like to call a very eminent psychiatrist, Sir Ephraim Redface.

Sir Ephraim: Seldom have I encountered such a clear case of what we psychiatrists call *Dementia Judicalis*, or *Saunders' Syndrome*, as it is commonly known to the layman. In my expert view, were these unfortunate proceedings against my brother's client to continue, Mr Justice Fraud might well be found guilty, which would undoubtedly be gravely detrimental to his balance of mind.

Cocklecarrot: Not to mention his balance of bank!

(Laughter)

Sir Hartley: Indeed M'lud. And, on that matter, may I suggest that it would help my client to retain his sanity were his salary to continue to be paid, in addition to the generous support of the legal aid board which has enabled my own fees to be paid in this matter.

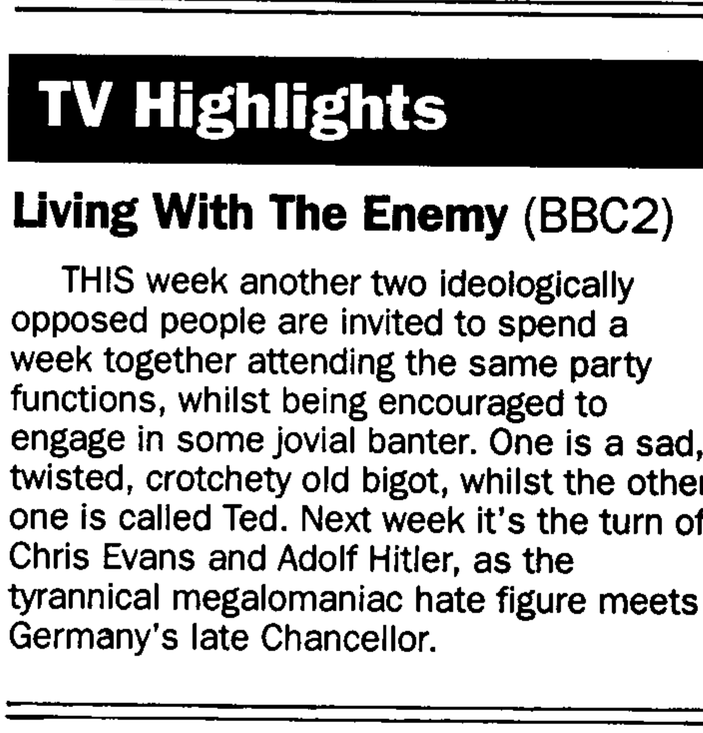
Cocklecarrot: As you wish, Sir Hartley. I therefore suggest that the Crown submit a plea of *nolle prosequi*, so that we can all go off to luncheon at the Garrick.

(The case was concluded)

TV Highlights

Living With The Enemy (BBC2)

THIS week another two ideologically opposed people are invited to spend a week together attending the same party functions, whilst being encouraged to engage in some jovial banter. One is a sad, twisted, crotchety old bigot, whilst the other one is called Ted. Next week it's the turn of Chris Evans and Adolf Hitler, as the tyrannical megalomaniac hate figure meets Germany's late Chancellor.



Advertisement

Bank Of England

IMPORTANT NOTICE

IN view of the impending collapse of the world's economies, the Bank has made the following adjustment to its rate as follows:

NEW RATE 7.5673012%

OLD RATE 7.5673011½%

The new interest rate will take effect immediately from 1 March 2001*

E. George
Governor
Bank of England
Threadbare Street

*Subject to availability

WEEKEND AUGUST 8TH AND 9TH

1.00PM TO 5.00PM SUNDAY 11.00AM TO 5.00PM

VICE AT 3.00PM SUNDAY CONDUCTED BY THE REV. S V CARTWRIGHT

All Saints Church, East Norton

NEW OLD SAYINGS

In the country of the blonde the moneyed man is king

National Poetry Day

The following poem was written specially for Radio 4 as part of its celebration of National Poetry Day (8 October 1998) and recited by the author:

The Six Pips

Pip
Pip
Pip
Pip
Pip
Pip
Peep

The Six Pips
Yes. We
Hear them
Every day.

But what
Are they?

And why
Are there
Six?

And why is the sixth
One longer
Than the others?

It is a
Mystery

E J Threep (17½)

HAVE WE GOT NEW NEWS FOR YOU!

Auntie's Shock Plan

by our Media Staff Lunchtime O'Nooze

THE WORLD of broadcasting was rocked to its foundations today, when the BBC unveiled a "total revolution" in its world-famous news service.

After a £2 billion, in-depth nationwide survey, involving 762 focus groups, the BBC has revamped its news schedules to make them:

- **more accessible**
- **more flexible**
- **more responsive to the needs of a rapidly changing global marketplace.**

Among the key changes will be a completely redesigned "flagship" News At Six, presented by Jill Dando and Dan Dildo, and concentrating on local stories with a global twist.

The new-look Nine O'Clock News will, in contrast, focus on global stories with a local twist.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

6 O'Clock News

Anna Ford *(for it is not she)*: Good evening. Tonight's headlines include:

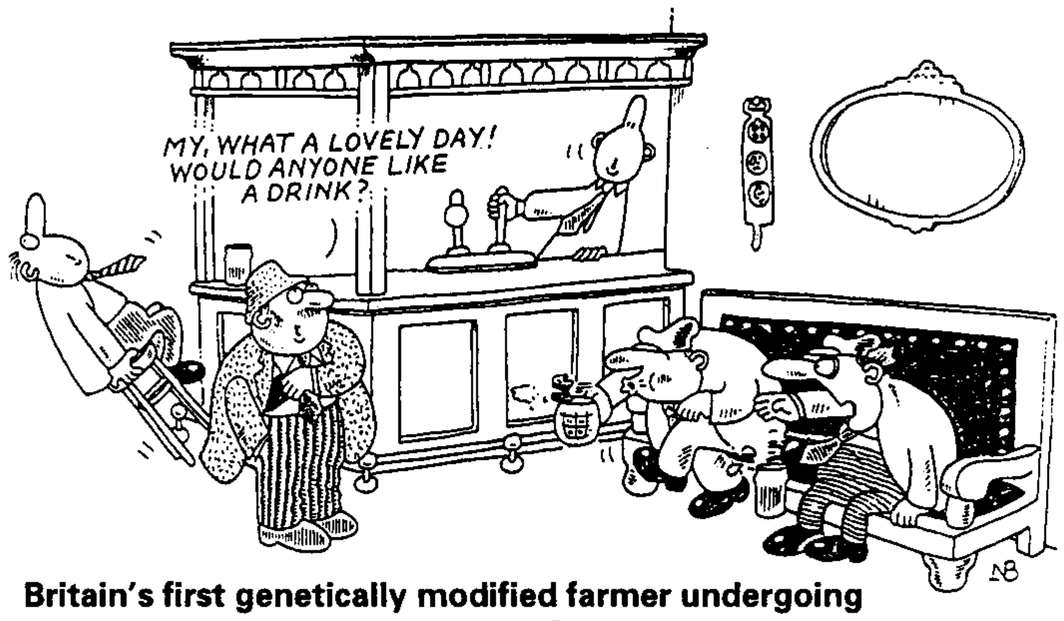
☺ Multiple pile-up in Kampala High Street as traffic lights fail.

☺ Afghan scientist announces breakthrough in treatment of varicose veins.

☺ Sacramento, California. Lollipop lady retires after 86 years.

☺ And why the Calcutta wheelie-bin men are going on strike.

(That's enough local news with a global twist. Ed.)



Britain's first genetically modified farmer undergoing trials at The Dun Cow

World of Soccer

NEW NEASDEN MANAGER DEAL GETS GO-AHEAD

by **E.I. Erewigo**, Our Man With The Year's Supply Of Viagra And The Weekend Ticket To Amsterdam

THE SOCCER world was rocked to its foundations today when Neasden FC announced that after months of behind-the-scenes horse trading they had finally got their man.

Said a jubilant chairman, local launderama magnate Brigadier Buffy Cohen: "We are delighted. The Squirrels have been languishing in the relegation zone for too long. Now under new management we can finally see light at the end of the tunnel, which the fans have unfortunately blocked with beer cans."

Saviour

At a specially convened press conference, Brig. Cohen introduced the man who is about to take his place in Neasden's hot seat. "Gentlemen," he beamed, "a big hand for Mr Ruudi Gitt from across the seas."

Ruud Awakening

As champagne corks popped and cameras flashed the new Neasden supremo, an ashen-faced man with dreadlocks, took his place on the platform to answer questions.

When I put it to him that he bore an uncanny resemblance to his predecessor, Mr Ronald Knee, Mr Gitt reacted angrily.

Hands On

"I am 100% Dutch," he rasped. "As indeed is this bottle of Advocaat." When he proceeded to drain the bottle, his dreadlocks fell off to reveal the bald pate of the notorious soccer mastermind.

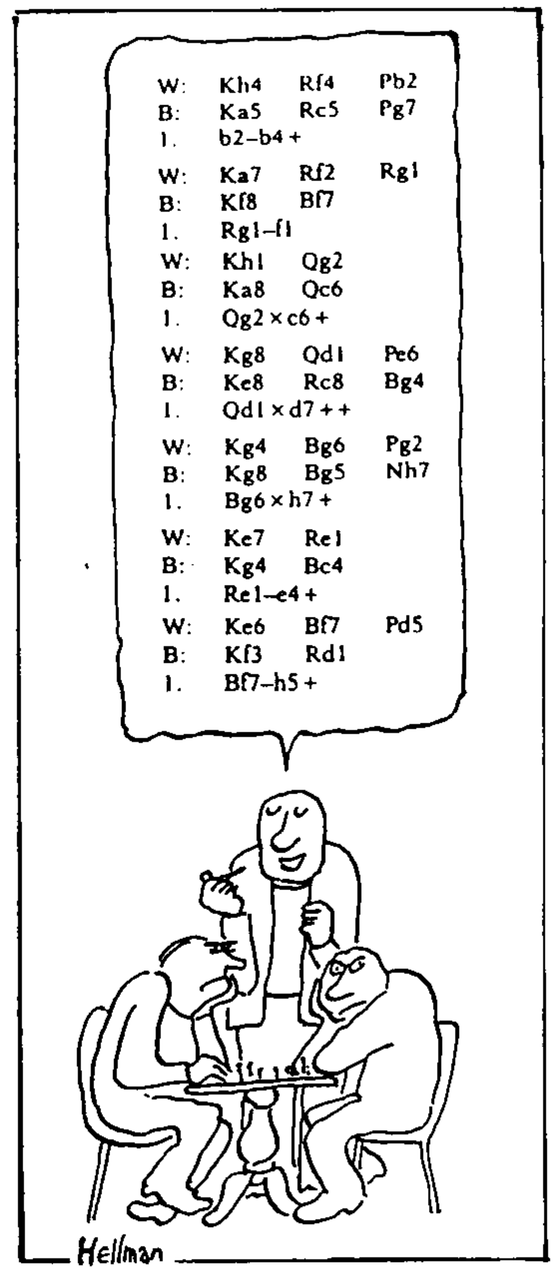
Said club faith-healer, local masseuse Miss Sharon of Tesco Road Adult Healing Centre: "It is true that this man is technically Ron Knee but with my healing hands I have given him an entirely new persona which will in time bring lasting benefit to the club."

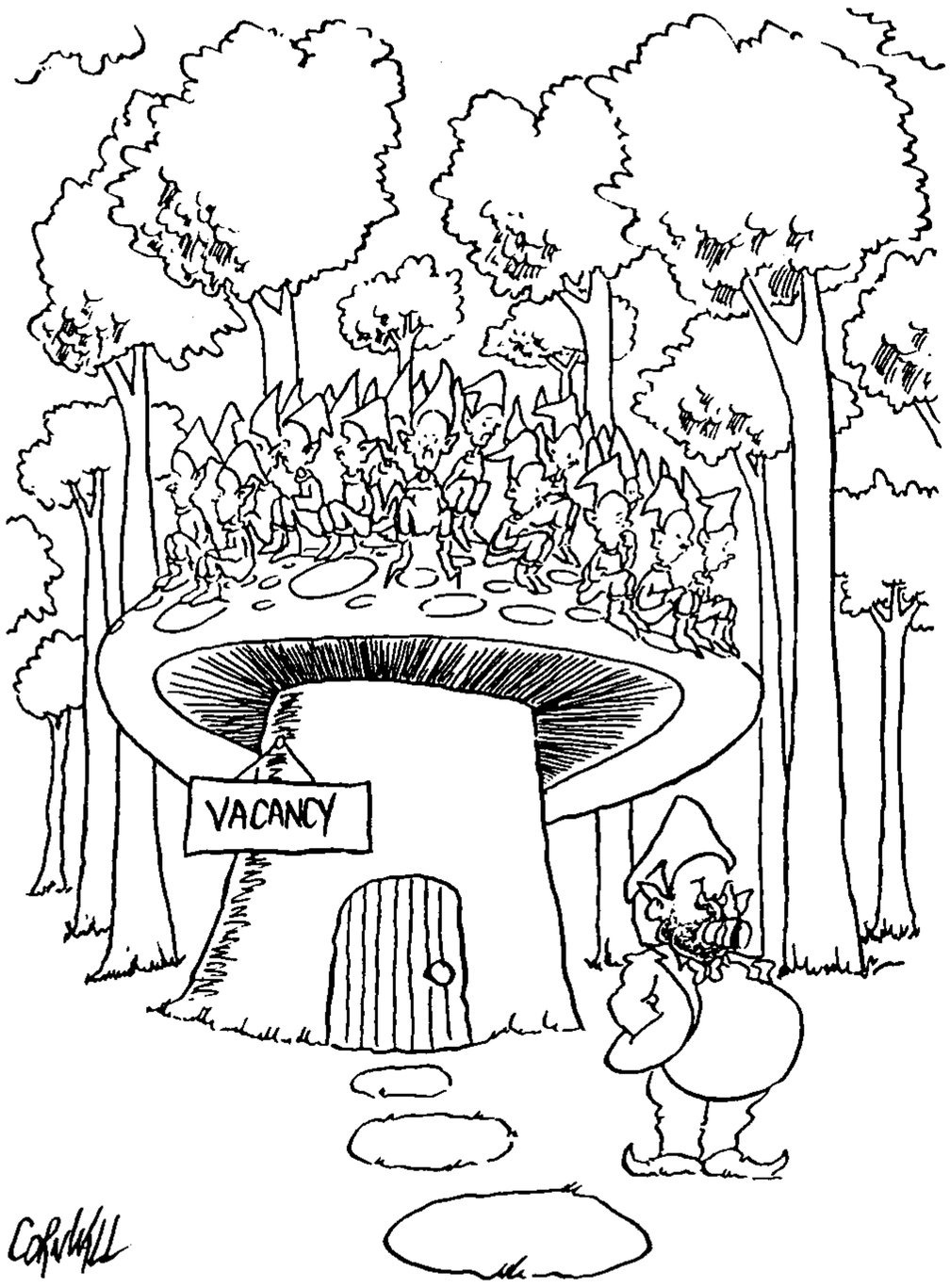
Ron Knee is 59.

Late Score

European Cup Losers Cup

Gozo Athletico 3
(Mintoff 2 Sentoff 1)
Neasden 0





896 COLIN: A bronze of a young blacksmith wearing only a leather apron, his tool in hand, *signed and bearing a foundry mark*, 13½" high

H.Y. Duke & Son auction catalogue

2.00 Annual fete: Held by Wantage Dead and Hard of Hearing Club.

Oxford Times

It's a well-known fact that we women positively *hated* sex until *Cosmo* came along and taught us all how to get the most out of it. Now, thanks to *Cosmo*, statistics show we're enjoying MORE and BETTER orgasms than ever before. 'Scuse me for a sec. Oooooyeeehaaah! Whoopsy, there goes another! And I didn't even move from my desk! FAB! Here on *Cosmo* we have them *all the time!*

With your orgasms in mind, we're delighted to bring you, free with this issue, *The Cosmopolitan Book of 253 Sensational Positions Around the Home*. For instance, have you ever tried having sex with your guy in a tumble-drier? Or in a chest of drawers? Or on the glass shelf in the bathroom where you put your toothpaste? You haven't?!! No wonder you're so fat and you've got spots and nobody wants to go to do it with you!

Cosmo Arts: Zero orgasms in Ian McEwan's HOT NEW Booker contender — but it's still a tender and titillating MUST READ. Huggy Bear MARTIN AMIS has a new book of SHORT STORIES out — and you know what they say about men with SHORT STORIES! Finally, the new JOHN MORTIMER is a cool, very papery 325 pages long — talk about COMING out in HARD back!!

Find your V-spot. Here on COSMO we're all having orgasms all the time from our G-spots, our A-zones, our C-zones and our T-spots. Been there, done that — bor-ing!

But have you found your V-spot yet? We all have!! How to find it: go right inside, first right, second left, round the corner and straight on, you can't miss it. But don't worry if you can't find it: you're probably one of the 2.01% of sad women who just don't know how to have fun.

Cosmo's 6 Ways to Become Really Rich and Famous:

1) Change your hairstyle and lose weight so you look just like Nicole Kidman. Then wait until she is in her dressing room at the Donmar Warehouse, lock the door — and take her place on stage! The critics will go wild — and you'll get to go home with hunky Tom Cruise!

2) Become a White House intern by filling in the FREE form in next month's Cosmo — then give a sensational blow-job to the Vice-President of the United States! But first lose weight!

3) Find out which glamorous five-star hotel Hollywood heartthrob George Clooney will be checking into on his next visit to Britain. Lose weight, do something about those flabby buttocks, cut down on fatty solids, and apply for a job as a chamber-maid. Then when you know George is soaking his HUNKY body in the bath use your skeleton key to burst into the room! Taking care to first remove your clothes, leap into George's bath with him — and exit as the soon-to-be 4th Mrs George Clooney! But remember — the Hollywood paparazzi can be intrusive: avoid all hassle by keeping the exact location of your star-studded wedding a closely-guarded secret known only to you, George and your new best friend, the fabulous Roseanne Arnold!

Diet News... Diet News... Diet News... Experts at a Colorado-based institute have discovered that 100% Full Fat Ice-Cream eaten in HUGE quantities can make you PUT ON THOSE INCHES. So if you want a body like Naomi Campbell, cut back on that extra Cadbury's Flake and remember to go for THE ONE-SCOOP OPTION.

Food News... Food News... Food News... Sexiest food on the market? You guessed it! Mmmmmm! It's the LATEST 100% Full-Fat Vanilla and Strawberry Ice Cream with EXTRA chocolate chip cookies! Apparently, top model KATE MOSS is totally HOOKED ON IT and she and top-shag boyfriend hearthrob superstar JOHNNY DEPP eat it ALL DAY EVERY DAY. Kate reveals that slurping it down gives her a guaranteed extra 101 orgasms a day — and it's also a great way to lose weight!

COSMOPOLITAN Diary

Serious COSMO Issue of the Month: Proportional Representation. A commission on electoral reform under Lord Jenkins of Hillhead reports next month. This is a serious issue, which could effect the future of our parliamentary democracy. But is changing the voting system a good idea? In a word, do we really want a first-past-the-post system? Or would we prefer to lose a bit of weight, gorge ourselves silly on a super-sexy tub of vanilla ice-cream and have 62 orgasms a night with the fabulous Ewan Macgregor?

3 Ways to Boost Your Lifestyle if You're Stuck in a Dead End Job Reading Self-Help Lists:

1) Save those boiled sweet-wrappers! Sellotaped together, they could make a FABULOUSLY REVEALING baby-doll negligee similar to the type worn by Bubbly TV Personality Anthea Turner before her bust-up with BOYFRIEND GRANT.

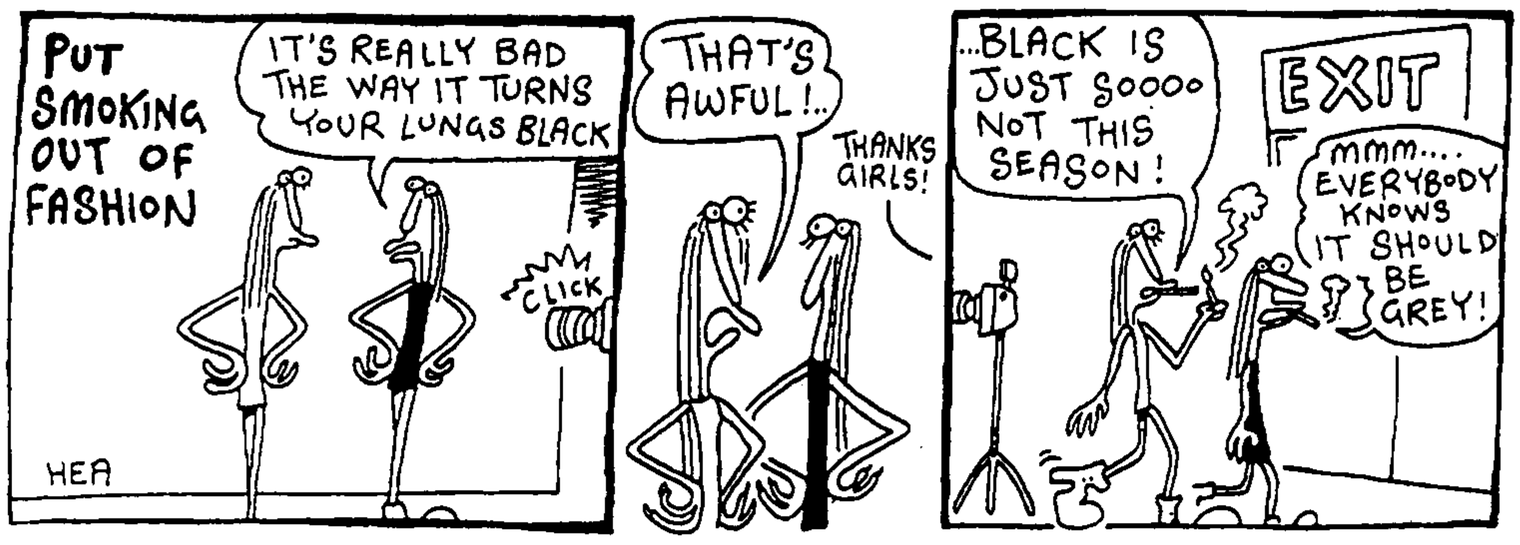
2) Impress your friends! Fill your fridge with magnum bottles of WHITE'S LEMONADE and saucers groaning with HEINZ BAKED BEANS! With one glance, friends will IMAGINE you are enjoying a CHAMPAGNE AND CAVIARE LIFESTYLE!

3) Gripfix a lifesize pin-up of sexy Robert Carlyle to your boyfriend's head, make him escort you to a top celebrity party at the HOTEL SAVOY — and see heads turn!

HEY YOU! STOP WORRYING! If you're falling short of the national average of six (6) orgasms per sex-session and nineteen (19) sex-sessions per week — don't worry! It probably means that your boyfriend doesn't fancy you very much after all — so perhaps you should think about losing a bit of weight and getting a new boyfriend Or are you a closet lesbian? It doesn't matter if you are, really it doesn't, not these days! But DO remember to RELAX and STOP WORRYING — particularly if you haven't REDECORATED YOUR SITTING-ROOM for six whole months (and you REALLY wonder why you don't have as many friends as you used to?!!). And what's that ODD SMELL in your bathroom? Hey, STOP WORRYING! Just lose weight, change jobs, get a new man, have yourself a makeover, get a new wardrobe — and BE YOURSELF!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


PUT SMOKING OUT OF FASHION
IT'S REALLY BAD THE WAY IT TURNS YOUR LUNGS BLACK
CLICK
HEA
THAT'S AWFUL!..
THANKS GIRLS!
...BLACK IS JUST SOOOO NOT THIS SEASON!
EXIT
mmm.... EVERYBODY KNOWS IT SHOULD BE GREY!

"This is just another sign of this country's moral degradation," said Dr Adrian Rogers, of the Conservative Family Institute. "I don't see why people should be paying for people to have homosexual activity. It really should be available only for married couples."

Sunday Times

7.00 Holiday Heaven Mandy Smith visits Disneyworld, and David Gower returns to Oporto and the Douro Valley in Portugal. Alice Beer enjoys a driving break in Scotland, and a Buckinghamshire man in Tenerife (T) (4377)

The Times

Literary Review

The word made trash

The Pocket Canon
(Canongate 12 vols, £1 each, boxed set £14.99)

WHATEVER you might think of the execution, the idea is first rate. Twelve books of the Bible (six Old Testament, six New), in the King James version, dinkily got up in a tiny paperback format with alluring covers, introduced by 12, um, cultural commentators who might reasonably be supposed to have something worth saying about them.

The latter include major hip dudes like Nick Cave and Raving Willie Self, so the youth vote is sewn up and broadsheet column inches guaranteed. All in all, quite the canniest publisher's marketing stunt in years, topped by the news that, yes, Christian bookshops are being lobbied against stocking it and some diehard evangelical lawyer in the boondocks is bringing a blasphemy suit.

Inevitably a skim through the 12 newly-commissioned prefaces offers the spectacle of some familiar figures doing what they do best. Fay Weldon (Corinthians) hectors away. Bloke Morrison (John) unpacks his Umbro bag of Yorkshire boyhood memories for the umpteenth time while contriving to hint at what a *lad* he was ("I was discovering strange, more various truths, through drink, drugs, girls, music, the mystic east.")

Will Self, remembering a dead friend who became fixated on the Book of Revelation, supplies the usual narcotic reminiscences ("In the imbroglio of acid, speed, heroin, hashish, cocaine, philosophy, youth, literature, political protest, sex, friendship and dancing, Ben's mind frayed" — really, you know, I'm surprised they had time for the dancing); while A.S. Byatt is at her most lofty in a no-holds-barred discussion of the Song of Solomon (Jung, Darwin, Tennyson and Paul Celan shipped in as witnesses). Sadly, in this kind of company one fears that the all-too temperate reflections of the Bishop of Edinburgh (Luke) are likely to fall on stony ground.

By far the best contribution comes from A.N. Wilson, whose thoughts on Matthew's Gospel ought to stand as a solemn warning to anyone avid to fix a late-twentieth century sensibility on the Works of the Lord. Stating some of the customary objections to virgin births and miracles, which have the Richard Dawkins (thankfully absent here) of this world gnashing their teeth, he observes that "They are all questions which seem reasonable enough, but they will lead you into the most pointless, arid negativism." We are, Wilson concludes, "too hemmed in by our imaginative limitations to see the sort of things this book is doing".

A great pity, then, that Wilson's preface wasn't circulated in advance to one or two of the younger contributors who, not to put too fine a point on it, fall over themselves in their haste to submit these ancient texts to some brainy, literalist, modern scrutiny.

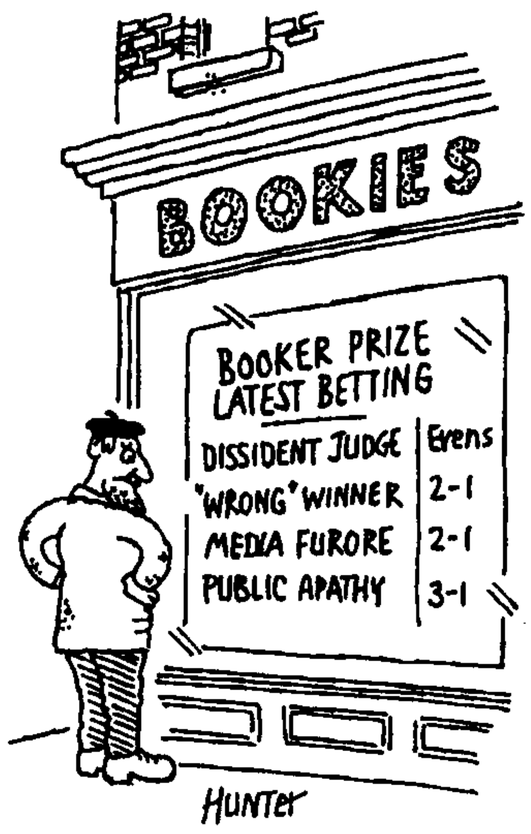
Louis de Bernières clumps his way through Job tut-tutting about the "unpleasantly sarcastic megalomaniac" in charge and providing a highflown finale about how "we admire tyranny no longer and we desire justice more than we are awed by vainglorious asseverations of magnificence." (The point about Christian justice is that it comes from God, you twit.) Will Self gets all bug-eyed about Revelations being "the very stuff of modern psychotic nightmare" — and he should know.

Set against this kind of fluff, Nick Cave on Mark is actually kind of interesting, while Doris Lessing (Ecclesiastes) clearly forgot to read the controversy clause in her contract. Nadir is reached, however, in Fay Weldon's thoughts about St Paul's letter to the Corinthians. What's the Weldon line? Well, she tries to come over all *relevant* on us. Paul's Damascene conversion was apparently the equivalent of "crossing the floor". He had a "hot-line to God", don't you know, as well as being "a very Mandelson of religious politics".

Later she gets all folksy-patronising ("Yes folks, there was a time when moral blame was levelled at those who erred in sexual matters."). Well, excuse me while I go outside to be sick. The point, Fay, angel, is that then is not now, that our duty to the past is to assess it on its own terms before we start importing ridiculous modern parallels and modish modern garnishes whose unspoken subtext is that only what gets thought and said in 1998 is of any real importance.

In this context the sight of Louis de Bernières deciding that, really, he doesn't much like the deity of Job has all the force of a small boy attacking an elephant with a pea-shooter.

Going back to Fay's hastily written piece of huffing, though, there is some slight mitigation. Until about a month before publication Canongate was coyly advertising the existence of a "mystery celebrity" who was going to tackle Corinthians. In the end he decided to say no, and Fay came in as sub. And the man who declined to share with us his undoubtedly groovy thoughts on this subject is? Yup, the Reverend Anthony Blair.



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *THE haemorrhage of authors from Patrick "Wheeler Dealer" Walsh at the Christopher Little literary agency has reached new heights.*

In June one disgruntled client joined the exodus after repeatedly failing to elicit a response from Walsh regarding disputed "photocopying costs and sundries" deductions from royalty cheques. Wheeler Dealer was delighted to see the tiresome quibbler go — perhaps no longer. For the defector, Martin Booth, has now turned up on the Booker shortlist.

■ DR Seamus Perry's review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of Richard Cronin's latest work, a collection of essays on the year 1798, was a glowing one.

The book was lauded as a "strong inauguration" of Macmillan's new *Romanticism in Perspective* series. Dr Perry singled out for praise the contributions of one Dorothy McMillan and a Dr Nicola Trott, whose essay was "accomplished and nimble".

Not surprisingly there were trebles all round at the University of Glasgow's English literature department, where Cronin is head of department — and where his wife Dorothy McMillan teaches alongside Prof Stephen Prickett, the editor of the *Romanticism in Perspective* series. Also employed in the department are another husband and wife team: Nicola Trott and Dr Seamus Perry.

■ *TIME OUT* executive editor Steve Grant has been going to extraordinary lengths to ensure the success of the *Time Out Book of Interviews*.

Touring bookshops in London's Oxford Street, he found three which weren't displaying the book prominently enough for his liking and so subjected staff to prolonged rants. The lack of copies in the Virgin store led Grant to accuse the manager of failing to stock his book because "we haven't reviewed that cunt Branson's autobiography!"

This conspiracy theorising is nothing compared to the accusations Grant has been throwing at his editor at Penguin, Tony Lacey. In a series of enraged letters and faxes, Lacey, a keen West Ham fan, was accused of preferring such works as *The Life and Ideas of Mahatma Ghandi* by John Hartson over Grant's worthy tome. And he was even held responsible for the negative review of the book in the *Observer* by Katherine Flett, who, Grant claims, "couldn't write bollocks in a sand dune".

■ THE most interesting thing about Sir Edward Heath's remorselessly tedious memoirs is the number of people who are thanked for helping him write about himself.

The most invaluable of these memory-joggers, apparently, was a certain Michael McManus — without whose "unwearying and unstinting support this book would not now be being published".

McManus, who keeps a lifesize model of Darth Vader in his flat along with a prized set of *Dad's Army* figurines, previously worked for the ex-minister David Hunt — whose fall from grace mysteriously coincided with McManus's presence in his counsels. After moving to Heath's office he took little interest in the great book until the bulk of the work had been done by others, including Lord Armstrong. But he made up for lost time by inserting several flattering references to himself in the text. On page 789, for instance, we learn that "Michael McManus is a great lover of classical music". Fascinating!

'Bookworm'

FRANKFURT PASSPORT CONTROL
PURPOSE OF VISIT, HERR SNIPCOCK?
TO DO BUSINESS.... FORGE CONTACTS... SIGN DEALS....
BUT IT SAYS HERE YOU ARE EIN PUBLISHER?
OH ALL RIGHT... TO DRINK A LOT AND FALL OVER

footnotes

BOWLED BY A BOUNCER

ACQUITTED: Andy Griffiths

SENIOR police at Dyfed Powys in mid-Wales were said to be "extremely upset" by a television programme and an *Eye* article earlier this year about the strange deaths of two young men from explosives stolen from the army. After a court case last week, they are downright miserable.

On 19 February HTV's *Wales This Week* broadcast an investigation into the deaths of Paul Horner and Andrew Cridland in Brecon on 1 September last year. They were handling sticks of explosives which had been stolen from the local Dering Lines army camp by a Corporal Sinclair. He had passed them to his friend, former colour sergeant Douglas Tindal. Tindal and Sinclair pleaded guilty to stealing and receiving the explosives and were sent to prison for seven years. Judge Roderick D. Evans said he was certain he had not been told the truth about how and why the explosives had left the camp.

The *Wales This Week* programme which went out two weeks after the convictions claimed that police knew perfectly well for some time before the young men were killed that Tindal was walking around Brecon with explosives — and did nothing about it.

Two men said on air that they had told the police about the explosives. The first was a bouncer called Andy Griffiths; the second, Paul Burgess, a businessman. The police who were outraged by the programme vigorously denied both men's allegations. They were further infuriated when, on 29 March, the *Eye* revealed that there was yet another witness to the fact that the police knew about the explosives: a police officer, then unnamed.

A few weeks later Andy Griffiths was arrested and later charged with perverting the course of justice. He came up for trial at Merthyr crown court on 5 October. The prosecution alleged that he had tried to persuade a witnesses to lie at the dead men's inquest, and had assured her and her boyfriend that HTV would pay them huge sums of money for their lies. The boyfriend was interviewed in prison where he was wanted on charges involving violence and possession of a firearm. After he agreed to give evidence for the police at Griffiths's trial, he was released and the charges were dropped.

Had Griffiths been convicted, the resulting headlines would have backed the police allegations of an ugly conspiracy between a television programme and a bouncer to smear them. Yet, as the two main prosecution witnesses stumbled through their contradictory and entirely unconvincing stories, the case became more and more of a nightmare for the police.

Judith Davies for HTV insisted she had never offered a penny to anyone connected to the story. Griffiths denied he had even talked to either witness about their evidence at the inquest or that he could ever have suggested a payment from HTV. The prosecution case went from bad to worse when defence counsel suggested, as the *Eye* had done, that a serving policeman might have known about Tindal and the explosives.

The prosecution had no option but to call the officer. He turned out to be Richard Williams, a detective constable in Brecon at the time of the deaths. After the inquest he was put back in uniform and shifted miles out of the area to the far west of Pembrokeshire. He confirmed on oath that he *had* heard about Tindal and the explosives, and *had* passed the information on — but that nothing had been done.

The jury were out for 20 minutes before they came back with a unanimous verdict: not guilty. The faces of senior Brecon police which previously had been slightly smeared with egg were now almost entirely obscured by it.

Professor Boom Boom

■ NO ECONOMIST is more popular or more influential in Blairite circles than Professor Richard Layard of the LSE.

His book, *What Labour Can Do*, which was published to great Blairite acclaim in time for last year's general election, set out a Labour programme to ensure skills for all, jobs for all, an end to the "boom and bust" cycle and a growing economy boosted by the single European currency.

One way of testing how all this will work out is to read Prof Layard's other recent book, published a few months before *What Labour Can Do* under the intriguing title *The Coming Russian Boom*. The main message of this book is to confound the pessimists and predict, er, uninterrupted stability and growth for the Russian economy and currency.

"Whatever happens to the politics," the professor assured his readers, "there will be strong economic growth based on private enterprise. Russia's economy which is now the size of California's will grow faster over the next 20 years than that of most OECD countries and probably faster than most emerging markets (outside the Far East)... Foreigners will reap good returns... Those who move fast will gain a special advantage from being first — and from the current undervaluation of Russian assets... Westerners... will make good money."

Prof Layard exuded this optimism for many months before and after his book came out. He was often the star at press conferences thrown by the Russian government's Working Centre for Economic Reform. In January 1996 he predicted that the Russian economy would grow by 5 percent a year for the rest of the century. In February 1996 he went out of his way to praise the "stability of Russia's financial markets". In April 1997 he was at it again, predicting "5 percent annual growth for the next decade".

In the same month *What Labour Can Do* was published full of all sorts of equally confident optimistic forecasts.

THE CUCKOO OF CALDERDALE

SIMON JENKIN

■ THE high standards in school inspection have been on parade at Calderdale, Yorkshire.

Last year, in the wake of the row over the Ridings school in Halifax, a team of government inspectors from Ofsted investigated the education authority and slammed it. A second report last May found some progress but not very much. The authority decided to call in a consultant to recommend appropriate action.

After discussion with the Local Government Association, the consultant chosen was Mr Simon Jenkin, former chief education officer in Devon (Jenkin's deputy for a couple of months in 1989 was an up-and-coming educationalist called Chris Woodhead, now head of Ofsted).

Jenkin wrote a blistering report about the Calderdale authority: so blistering that the director of education took early retirement. An immediate problem arose. Who was to fill the vacancy as education boss? Step forward Mr Simon Jenkin, whose report had helped to create the vacancy in the first place.

Jenkin was taken on for another three months as a consultant at an undisclosed fee. Calderdale council says he is "now working to deliver the action plan" which he proposed. He is now director of education in all but name.

The *Eye* asked the council what steps had been taken to avoid an apparent conflict of interest in the appointment as temporary education chief of a consultant whose report had toppled his predecessor. Apart from confirming Mr Jenkin's appointment and their advertisement for a new full-time education director, the council had no reply.

HOBBS-NOBBING

■ AMONG the many lobbyists at the Tory party conference was Hobbs Associates, who were keen to sing the praises of the London Underground. The *Eye* asked London Underground a number of questions about Hobbs Associates, and had the following fascinating reply:

"It is true that Hobbs Associates has been awarded a contract involving IT millennium compliance and associated internal communications. The contract was awarded through London Transport's usual competitive tendering process. It is also true that one of the partners of Hobbs Associates is the wife of John Self, general manager of the Jubilee and East London lines. The work is nothing to do with Mr Self's areas of responsibility.

"In accordance with London Underground's Business Ethics policy, Mr Self wrote to London Underground's director of passenger services to draw his attention to the fact that Hobbs Associates were tendering for this work and that his wife is a partner in the firm. It is not true that the wife of David Bailey, LT's commercial director, is involved with the management of Hobbs. She is a part-time employee, and has been for about six months."

CREAM TEES

IN 1987, in her general election campaign to "regenerate the inner cities", the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher was filmed walking proudly through wasteland at Teesdale, Stockton.

In 1997, in the general election campaign, the then prime minister John Major was filmed walking proudly with Thatcher along the same "regenerated" route. Throughout the ten years between these two silly walks, a new quango, Teesside Development Corporation (TDC), strove to put the two prime ministers' policies into practice.

The TDC was wound up earlier this year. Its chairman Sir Ron Norman, who was knighted in 1995, and its chief executive Duncan Hall retired, very pleased with their 10 years' work. Their enthusiasm is not shared by the Commission for New Towns, another quango which has been told to clear up the TDC's mess.

The commission has had to take over the assets of several other similar quangos, but in Teesside separate offices have had to be set up. The commission's worries include:

● The Tees Barrage. Before it was wound up the TDC commissioned reports on structural problems in its treasured barrage project, notably in the canoe slalom and the interceptor sewer. An expensive (about £100,000) investigation by experts from Imperial College identified problems which would cost more than £1m to put right (the figure was in the draft report but was mysteriously removed). The British Research Establishment uncovered serious weaknesses in the concrete. If these were not put right at once, the BRE warned, the barrage might have to be rebuilt in 30 to 35 years' time. The barrage would normally have been taken over by the local water company (Northumbrian Water) or by British Waterways. Both organisations are refusing to take over the barrage without substantial compensation.

● The 'Tuxedo Royale'. The last act of the TDC was to grant a mooring lease at Middlesbrough dock to the operator of a "floating discotheque". The lease obliges the corporation — and its unlucky successors — to pay for expensive "preparatory works" to fit the ridiculous vessel into the dock.

● The Riverside Stadium, home of Middlesbrough Football Club. The TDC gave itself planning permission to build the stadium and imposed strict conditions about access and decontamination of the ground which was once an oil storage depot. Not all these conditions have been met. Later, the TDC gave the football club further planning permission for 5,000 more seats in the stadium on condition car parking spaces were increased by 1,600. This condition wasn't fulfilled either and the money the TDC left for the car park job hasn't proved nearly enough.

PRIME MINISTERS OF SILLY WALKS: John Major and friend

How much will all this cost the new quango, which, like the old one, is financed by taxpayers? A CNT spokeswoman was suitably cautious: "The financial situation bequeathed by TDC on its wind-up has been a matter for the department of the environment, transport and regions to consider. CNT is not in a position to comment."

PS: Other triumphs of the TDC include:

1. A loan in 1994 of £2.2m to Chris Liveras, a former criminal bankrupt who had been in prison for fraud, to help him create 700 jobs in a cake factory (the project soon collapsed and the firm went into receivership).

2 A grandiose plan in 1995 to build an ASDA hypermarket on a derelict site at Middlehaven on the South Bank of the Tees. The plan was backed by expensive consultants hired by the TDC. Objectors took it to judicial review where it was quashed last year. The corporation and chief executive Hall were subjected to a withering attack by Mr Justice Sedley, who concluded that they had woefully fallen short of their obligations as objective planners.

3. A series of hideous concrete obelisks built throughout the area to commemorate the TDC's 10 glorious years. The building costs of the obelisks was £151,000, and after all the hype it is doubtful whether the taxpayer saw much change from half a million.

BORE MEMORIAL: There are ten of these littering Teesside

THE MAGNIFICENT ANDERSENS

On the carpet...

■ **WHEN, in July, a whistlebower at Allied Carpets exposed a long-running accounting scam which falsely boosted the company's accounts by more than £6m, the directors wondered how the scam could have been missed by the firm's distinguished auditors — New Labour's favourite accountant, Arthur Andersen.**

A top firm was sent in to investigate the scam: Arthur Andersen. Arthur Andersen duly reported that the scam had been going on for about six years and was mainly the fault of Allied's internal auditors, who should be "outsourced" (put out to an independent accounting company).

This conclusion contrasted rather oddly with Allied's directors' confident assurances the previous year that their internal financial controls were all working marvellously. These assurances were described by Arthur Andersen in the Allied Carpets annual report last year as "not inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit work". In other words, in the solemn judgement of Arthur Andersen, last year Allied Carpets' internal auditors were fine. This year they were a disgrace.

Strangely the Arthur Andersen report made no comment about the performance in detecting and correcting the scam of the external auditors, er, Arthur Andersen. Allied Carpets directors were not impressed. Arthur Andersen "resigned" (was sacked). So did David Pout, Allied's finance director.

No tears, please. Mr Pout left the company with a comforter of £221,000. And Arthur Andersen was paid £370,000 (nearly four times its annual audit fee) for its exhaustive report.

and on the payroll...

His Excellency Sir Nigel

■ **AS SOON as he was 60 last year, Sir Nigel Broomfield KCMG retired after a long foreign office career which ended with four years as HM ambassador in Germany.**

Before a year was out he was on the board of Foreign and Colonial Investment Trust and the engineering combine TI. Inevitably, too, he became a consultant — to Arthur Andersen.

STANDING ASIDE: David Mitchell

■ **THE chaos with NIRS, Andersen Consulting's national insurance computer (see *Eye* 959) is a bit of an embarrassment to Andrew Mitchell, who until May 1997 was Tory MP for Gedling and parliamentary under secretary at the department of social security, which commissioned the NIRS computer.**

When his 10,637 majority was converted into a Labour one of 3,802, Mr Mitchell hit the crowded trail of ousted Tory MPs looking for jobs in the City. He struck lucky almost at once at Andersen Consulting, where he was appointed a "senior adviser". (This was proof that Andersen's partiality for the Labour party does not blind the firm to the talents of Tories).

Mitchell applied to the advisory committee on business appointments, chaired by former Tory education secretary Lord Carlisle. The committee approved the appointment "subject to standing aside for 12 months from any involvement, direct or indirect, in any of the work which Andersen undertakes on behalf of the department of social security". Such as, for instance, the NIRS computer.

This is not the only standing aside Mr Mitchell has to do these days. In the month he took up his post at Andersen's (October last year) he became a non-executive director of his old merchant bank Lazards, where once again he must "stand aside for 12 months from any of Lazards' activities which directly or indirectly involve his former department".

There were plenty of other things for him to do though. In that same October he became a non-executive director of the Miller Insurance group, a senior adviser to Boots, an adviser to Financial Dynamics, and an adviser to Société Générale D'investissements. None of this was enough fully to engage Mr Mitchell's formidable abilities, so in March he got permission to "take up forthwith" two more appointments: as non-executive director of the CM Group and adviser to the board of the Hakluyt group.

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE wife of Bernie Ecclestone has several advantages over Formula One's ruling dwarf. She is much younger, taller and attractive — but most of important she is Croatian.

And that may be the key to the latest move in Ecclestone's bid, at 68, to cash in on his control of Grand Prix motor racing — the proposed $2bn Eurobond issue — while he is still in the driving seat. The fact that Slavica Ecclestone and her family were born outside Britain would enable control of Formula One to pass to an offshore trust outside the UK tax net... which is exactly what has happened.

Like treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson's Belgian madame bountiful Joska Bourgeois, Slavica Ecclestone can legitimately establish a tax-free offshore trust because she can claim to be non-domiciled in Britain for tax purposes. Domicile is crucial to avoiding taxes even for those like the statuesque Slavica who have homes in Britain and might be classed as resident for tax purposes. Recent tax changes mean it no longer matters that you have a home here. The key is how much time or, to be more precise, how many nights in a year you spend in it. The maximum is 90.

Such an offshore trust would be able to receive income tax free and, more importantly, be able to sell shares in Formula One Holdings, which controls the hugely lucrative Grand Prix broadcasting and promotional rights, tax free. Only a UK resident could face any tax on payments.

Ecclestone's representatives have confirmed that the $2bn is to go to an offshore trust controlled for the benefit of his wife and their two children which will not pay UK tax. So if they are not UK resident for tax, no problem. Ecclestone himself could not now set up such a trust in order to avoid tax. Tax changes made by the Tories closed that loophole to avoiding capital gains and inheritance tax. Even the so called "golden trusts" formed before 1991 and enjoyed by the likes of Richard Branson and Alan Sugar are no longer tax free. They only avoid tax if the settlors go non-resident, and even that is becoming more restricted if the intention is to sell and go. Now sellers have to stay away for five years, not one.

The fact that Ecclestone has been able to so arrange his tax affairs as to legitimately keep that enemy of tax avoidance chancellor Gordon Brown at bay will embarrass those Blair cronies who were only too happy to accept Bernie's since returned £1m donation.

Ecclestone's tax arrangements have fascinated tax experts even before it became clear last year that he was planning to cash in big time by floating Formula One Holdings for more than £1.5bn. This plan was aborted as a result first of growing City disenchantment with Ecclestone and his secretive business style, and then of an ongoing investigation by the European Commission's competition directorate.

Tax planners puzzled over why he should pay himself such huge salaries — up to £54m a year — when that would ensure a massive tax bill. One answer was that it was possible some or even most of this could be tax free if it was paid for work outside Britain where Ecclestone spends much of the year overseeing Formula One racing. That loophole was closed in the last budget to cries of pain from the Rolling Stones and others who live here but earn massively abroad.

This interest grew when it emerged that prior to the planned flotation Ecclestone had transferred control of Formula One Holdings to his wife Slavica. She had already become a director of a Jersey-registered company possibly suggesting where the offshore trust may be based or administered.

Given the value of the asset being transferred — more than £1bn — there was clearly a potentially huge capital gains tax liability — more than £400m — if this was held by the Inland Revenue to be a disposal. But the assumption was that this could legitimately escape tax as a transfer from husband to wife. That could also be so if this was done as part of a reorganisation of a private company prior to a flotation. And after seven years it would be inheritance tax free too.

And once control was held by the non-domiciled Slavica then it would be possible for her — unlike Bernie — to establish an offshore family trust to own the shares. Bingo. In two moves control of Formula One would be UK tax free forever.

Whether that is what has happened may be revealed in the prospectus for the Eurobond issue from Formula One Finance. But once again Ecclestone's timing may be out. The global market crisis means investors are all at once engaged in a lemming like dash for quality and security. That means the Ecclestone bond may now be a hard sell even with the notional carrot of a way into the Formula One equity a few years down the road.

All the questions and more which were asked and never answered last year leaving the flotation on the starting grid still remain. What is the Ecclestone trust going to do with the $2bn other than ensure the family's future comfort? What happens if the European commission curbs the Ecclestone monopoly? What is the future for broadcasting and advertising revenues with controls on tobacco advertising on the way? With the Far East undergoing economic meltdown, is it any longer a rival to the European circuits to be covered by the tobacco ban? What happens if Bernie goes under a Ferrari?

The Ecclestone bond may be secured on existing Formula One revenues but in the current risk-averse climate investors may prefer something much more secure and risk free — such as cash. But at least Bernie would seem to have beaten the taxman.

GEORGE SOROS admits to losing $2bn in Russia last month. Fellow hedge fund big hitter Julian Robertson is estimated to have lost as much in one day last week as a result of the global currency, bond and equity turmoil. Wannabe rival John Meriwether needed a $3.6bn rescue package to avoid being wiped out by his losses — $1.9bn in August alone. But what news of the man often spoken of as their equal in currency speculation, Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based soccer investor?

Like his rivals Lewis is known to be a major leverage player in the currency markets using billion dollar credit facilities. Lewis won big against the pound and the Mexican peso in previous campaigns. Unlike his rivals he has no public funds which have

"And it's got a built-in memory — so you don't need one"

to report investments or losses as well as gains. But it would be surprising if he had managed to avoid all the recent bad news that has humbled so many former masters of the universe. As events have proved, nobody wins them all.

But how do private investors like Lewis survive if they leverage their currency plays and get it badly wrong? That question was never answered by those who have boosted his personal wealth into the single figure billions. Soros and Robertson played with fund assets exceeding $20bn. Working with capital of $4bn Meriwether proved, however, the immutable law that leverage — borrowing against assets, in his case by as much as ten to one — cuts both ways exaggerating losses as well as profits.

Doubtless the answer will be that Lewis read all the markets right and has suffered no losses.

THE decision of the attorney-general John Morris and the crown prosecution service (CPS) not to try a second time to convict crown court judge Richard Gee on £1m mortgage fraud charges comes as no surprise. The CPS announced last week that it was accepting medical evidence from psychiatrists that Gee was mentally unfit to stand trial. The jury at his first trial which ended in July could not agree on a verdict.

However, soon after this decision those with knowledge of the case suggested that a second trial was unlikely. It appeared the CPS had lost enthusiasm for the prosecution despite claiming at the first trial that Gee had played a vital role in the fraud.

When a solicitor Gee was accused of helping to obtain a series of mortgages for two co-conspirators on speculative property deals disguised as residential homes. The property crash revealed the fraud. Gee denied the charges of conspiracy.

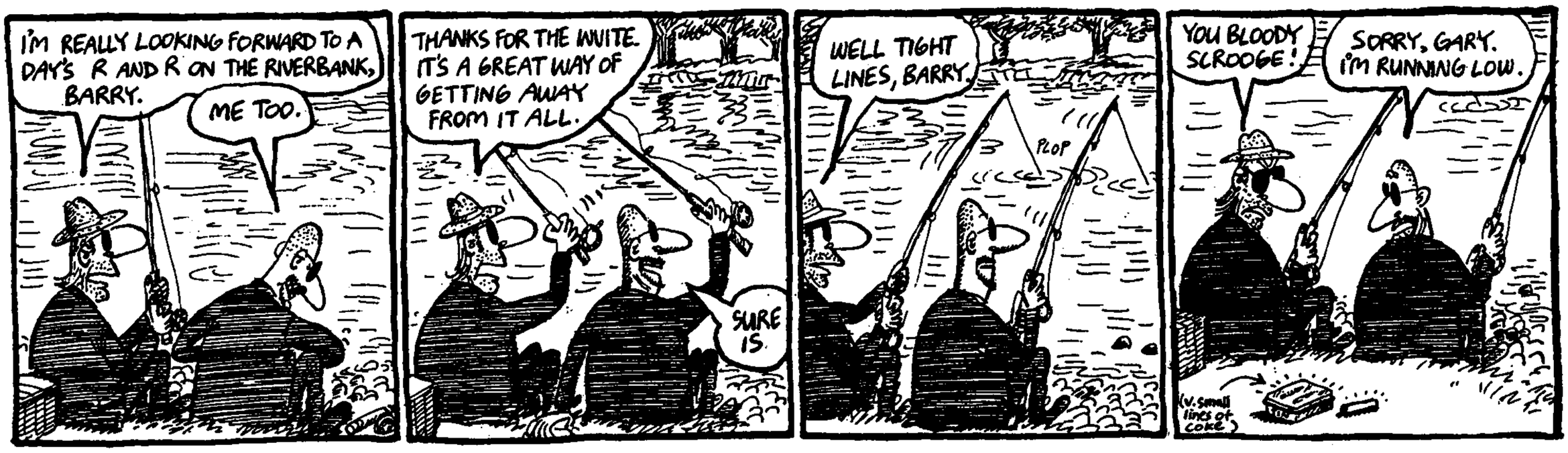
Cynics might wonder how it is that Gee was well enough to stand trial last March and initially to face another trial. They might also wonder whether Morris and the CPS's change of attitude would have been different if it had been plain Mr Gee facing the charges?

By a remarkable coincidence Gee's lawyers were none other than Peters & Peters, whose client Peter Young will no doubt also respond to any charges from the Serious Fraud Office with a similar claim that the former Morgan Grenfell fund manager too is mentally unfit to stand trial inviting a similar stay to any prosecution.

'Slicker'

Celeb

LIGGER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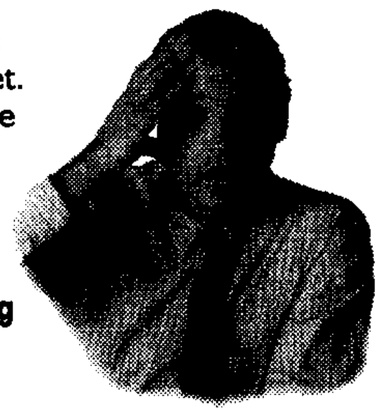

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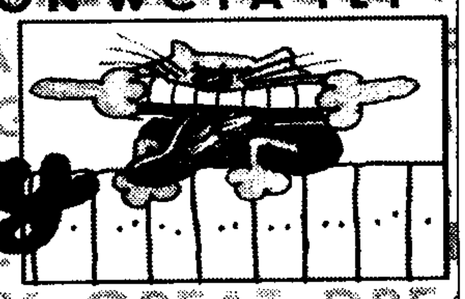

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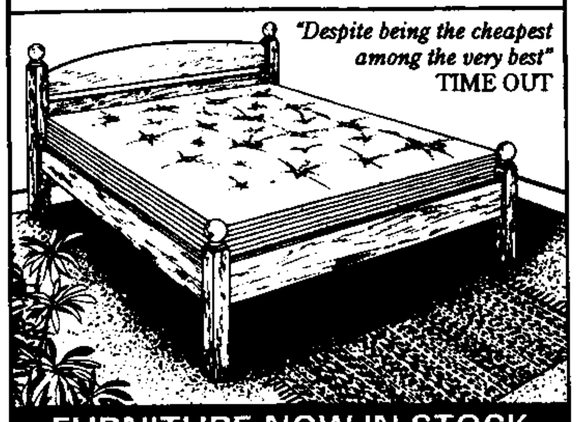

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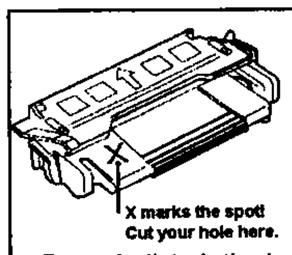

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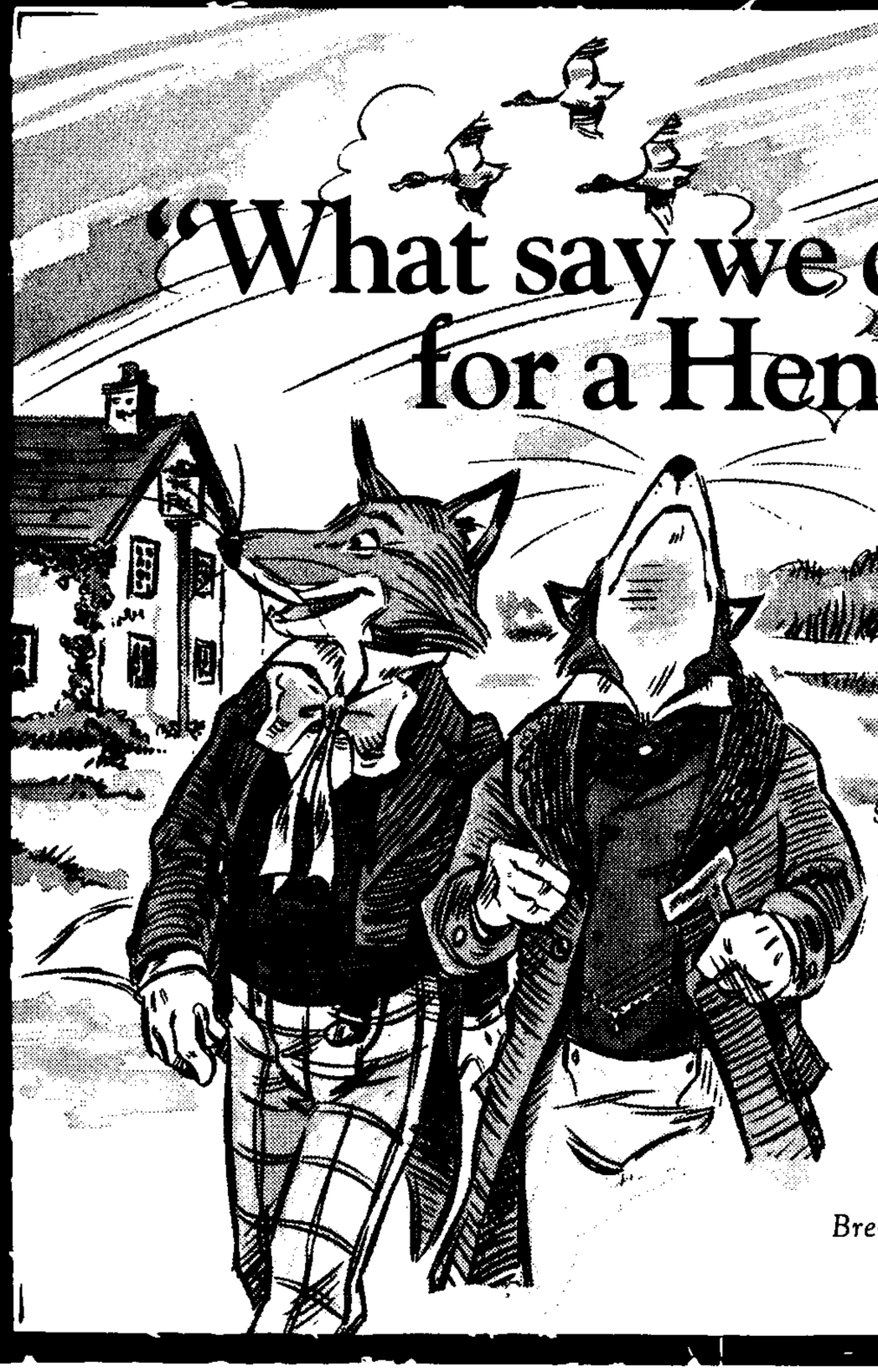

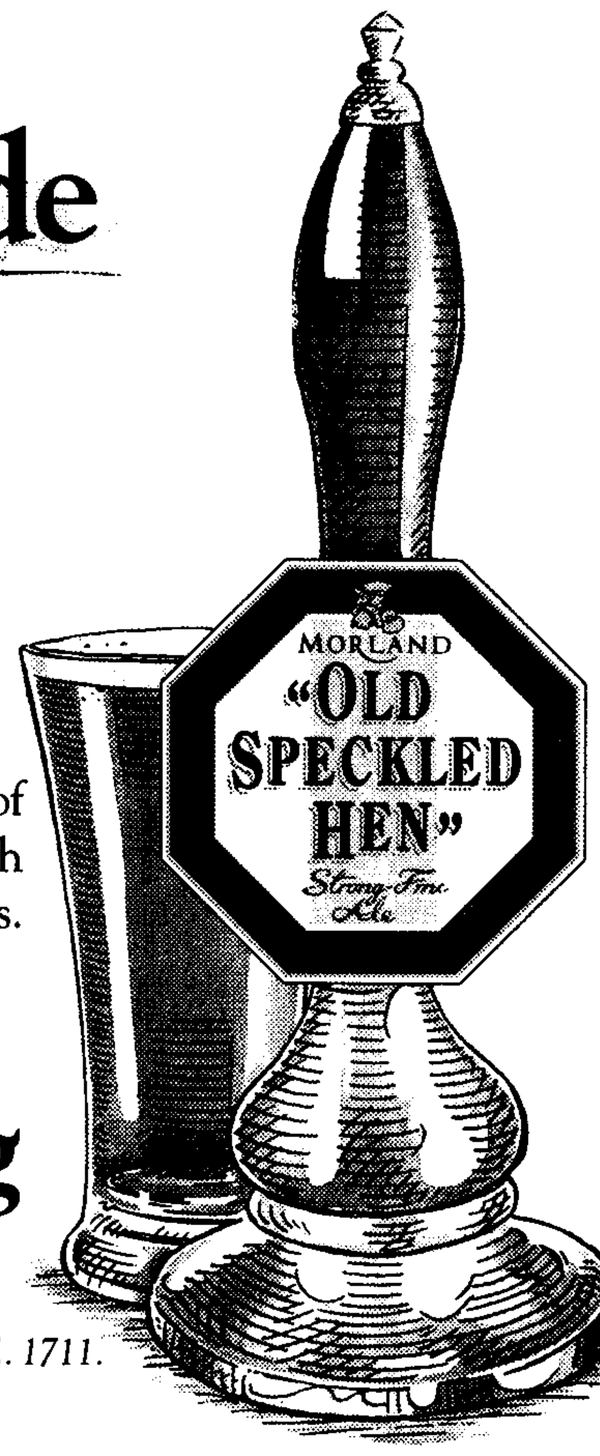

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age of consent

time to end inequality and lower the age of consent

Since the consensus is that heterosexual men and women are capable of sufficient maturity at 16 to have sex, then there are no grounds for preventing homosexuals from doing so. Such discrimination has no place as we approach the millennium and today's vote will be a small but important step in modernising Britain.

single parents

lecturing on morals will not cure society's ills

The Government-backed Institute for the Family must take care not to become a moralising, patronising institution. While the Government may want to encourage two-parent families, it is not its place to dictate that this is the "best" way to bring up children.

the lords

blair must not bow to peer pressure on vital reforms

If the peers are after a fight, they should be given one. Their case is non-existent and the Government should show up their wrecking efforts.

sink estates

save sink estates from going down the plughole

For too long, politicians have ghettoised the problems of sink estates. The idea that increasing prosperity for all would have a "trickle down" effect on those living in high-rise blocks in deprived areas has been exposed as a myth. A deprived area remains a deprived area - and blights the wider area around it - unless tackled by the Government.

europe

Despite Mr Blair's praise for the single currency yesterday, the Government is not openly embracing the Euro. The Euro is up and away and we are left on the tarmac. We are missing out on many of the benefits of the free market. In doing so we take much of the pain of European membership without the gain.

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Surprised? You should be.

THE EXPRESS

THE VOICE OF NEW BRITAIN

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